

THEOLOGISCHE UNIVERSITEIT VAN DE GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN
IN NEDERLAND TE KAMPEN

The Church is the Means, the World is the End

The Development of Klaas Schilder's Thought on the Relationship between the
Church and the World

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

TER VERKRIJGING VAN DE GRAAD
VAN DOCTOR IN DE THEOLOGIE,
OP GEZAG VAN DE RECTOR DR. R. KUIPER,
ZO GOD WIL IN HET OPENBAAR TE VERDEDIGEN
OP DONDERDAG 6 JUNI 2019
OM 15.00 UUR IN DE LEMKERZAAL,
BROEDERSTRAAT 16 TE KAMPEN

door

Johannes Marinus de Jong

Promotoren

Prof. dr. G. Harinck

Prof. dr. R.J. Mouw (Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena CA)

Leden beoordelingscommissie

Prof. dr. B.R. Ashford (Southeastern Baptist Theol. Sem., Wake Forest NC)

Prof. dr. B. Kamphuis

Prof. dr. C. van der Kooi (Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam)

© J. Marinus de Jong, 2019

Foto omslag © Maarten Boersema

Zetwerk X₂TEX

Druk GVO drukkers en vormgevers, Ede

Sponsored by **S**TICHTING **A**FBOUW **K**AMPEN

To my grandparents

Ad Kooij (1930-2014)

and

Hilly Kooij-Oggel (1933-2015)

Contents

Contents	iv
Abbreviations	ix
List of Figures	x
Acknowledgements	xi
1 Questioning the Ecclesial Turn	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.1.1 Schilder's Neo-Calvinism	2
1.1.2 Schilder as a Reformed Hauerwas?	4
1.2 The Ecclesial Turn	7
1.2.1 Hauerwas's Ecclesial Turn	9
1.2.2 Hauerwas's Turn Under Critique	11
1.2.3 Questions from Hauerwas's Ecclesial Turn	17
1.3 Methodology	19
1.3.1 Periodization	21
1.3.2 Status Quaestionis	23
1.3.3 Sources	25
2 Beginnings: 1890-1926	29
2.1 Schilder's Background	30
2.1.1 Social Background	30
2.1.2 Reformed Education	33
2.1.3 A Lonely Prophet	40
2.1.4 War, Crisis, and Renewal	45

2.2	Depth: Præsentia Salutis, Mysticism, and the Church	51
2.2.1	Apocalypse Now: Præsentia Salutis	51
2.2.2	Epistemology, Revelation, and Scripture	55
2.2.3	Spirituality	59
2.2.4	The Church	64
2.2.5	Conclusion	74
2.3	Breadth: Culture, Art, and the World	75
2.3.1	The Arts	76
2.3.2	Church Language	79
2.3.3	Christ and Culture	80
2.3.4	Conclusion	85
2.4	Theological Conclusion	86
3	Turning to the church: 1926-1934	89
3.1	Preliminaries	90
3.1.1	Background and Biography	90
3.1.2	1926: Barth and the Synod of Assen	95
3.2	The Church and the World: Assembly and Congregation	103
3.3	The Distinct Church	108
3.3.1	Church Under the Word	108
3.3.2	The Institutional Church	110
3.3.3	Dynamic Church	126
3.4	Public Church	135
3.4.1	Christ and Culture	135
3.4.2	Why the Church Should Be Public	143
3.4.3	How the Church Should Be Public	147
3.4.4	In Sum	152
3.5	Theological Conclusion	153
4	Increasing tensions: 1934-1944	155
4.1	Preliminaries	155
4.1.1	To Kampen and to Climax	156
4.1.2	Navigating between Barth and Kuyper	158
4.2	The Distinct Church	164
4.2.1	Unity As the Primary Mark of the Church	164
4.2.2	The Church Visible	170
4.2.3	Church and Covenant	173
4.2.4	The Church and Salvation	185
4.2.5	True, Lawful, and Pure Church	188
4.2.6	In Sum	191
4.3	Public Church	192

4.3.1	On God and the World	192
4.3.2	On Commonness	198
4.3.3	Church and Creation	210
4.3.4	Institution, Organism, and Kingdom	214
4.3.5	Church and Confession Against National Socialism	219
4.4	Theological Conclusion	225
5	Vrijmaking: Ideas to the Test 1944-1952	229
5.1	Vrijmaking, Liberation, Apocalypse	231
5.1.1	Two Liberations	231
5.1.2	Apocalypse Again	236
5.2	Distinct Church: Apology of the Schism	239
5.2.1	Lawful Church	239
5.2.2	True Church	242
5.2.3	The Dynamic of the True Church	245
5.2.4	The Tension After Schilder's Death	249
5.2.5	The Præsentia Salutis	250
5.2.6	In Sum	252
5.3	Public Church	254
5.3.1	The Mandate of the Small Remnant	254
5.3.2	Church and Organization	256
5.3.3	Conclusion	264
5.4	Theological Conclusion	266
6	A Neo-Calvinist Ecclesial Turn?	271
6.1	Schilder's Contribution	272
6.1.1	Consistency	272
6.1.2	Creation, Culture, Fall	273
6.1.3	Christ and the Church	275
6.1.4	The Church is the Means, the World is the End	275
6.1.5	The Nature of the Church	278
6.1.6	Tensions in Schilder's Thought	284
6.2	Questions for Hauerwas	287
6.2.1	Revelation and Epistemology	287
6.2.2	Creation and Commonness	289
6.2.3	Institution	290
6.2.4	Church and World	292
6.2.5	In Sum	294
	Nederlandse samenvatting	297

Bibliography	305
Works by Schilder	305
Other References	309
A Chart of Dutch Denominations	325
Glossary	327
Index	331
Over de auteur	337

Abbreviations

HC 1939	<i>Heidelbergse Catechismus</i> . Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1939
HC I-IV	<i>Heidelbergse Catechismus</i> . Four volumes. Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1947-1953
OWK I-IV	<i>Om Woord en Kerk: Preeken, lezingen, studiën en kerkbode-artikelen</i> . Four volumes. Ed. by C. Veenhof. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1948-1953
VWPreken I-III	<i>Preken</i> . Verzamelde Werken I. Three Volumes. Ed. by W. G. de Vries. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1954-1955
VWSchrift I-III	<i>Schriftoverdenkingen</i> . Verzamelde Werken II. Three Volumes. Ed. by C. Veenhof. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1956-1959
VWKerk I-III	<i>De Kerk</i> . Verzamelde Werken III. Three Volumes. Ed. by J. Kamphuis. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1960-1965
VW40-41	<i>Verzamelde Werken 1940-1941</i> . Ed. by G. Harinck. Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 1995
VW42-44	<i>Verzamelde Werken 1942-1944</i> . Ed. by W. G. de Vries. Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 1998
VW44-45	<i>Verzamelde Werken 1944-1945</i> . Ed. by G. Harinck and W. G. de Vries. Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 2001
VW17-19	<i>Verzamelde Werken 1917-1919</i> . Ed. by W. van der Schee. Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 2004
ET	English translation

List of Figures

2.1	Boardman Robinson, 'The Deserter' in: <i>The Masses: A Monthly Magazine Devoted to the Interests of the Working People</i> Vol. 8 No. 10 (New York: The Masses Publishing Co., July 1916), p. 18-19. .	47
2.2	'Elfde Kruiswegstatie. Jezus wordt aan het kruis genageld' by Jan Toorop (1917). Current location unknown.	61
2.3	'Tauberbischofsheimer Altar' by Matthias Grünewald (1524). Staatlichen Kunsthalle Karlsruhe.	63
2.4	Cover of <i>Goud, wierook en myrrhe</i> (1926)	78
3.1	The Berlin Sportspalast during a national-socialist rally in 1930 (Bundesarchiv Koblenz, 102-10391, Georg Pahl)	94
3.2	'Tableau I' by Piet Mondriaan (1921), Gemeentemuseum Den Haag	102
4.1	Announcement of Schilder's Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism in <i>De Reformatie</i> in 1949	160
A.1	Simplified overview of the genesis of Dutch denominations in the nineteenth and twentieth century	326

Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my late grandparents. They both passed away while I was working on this project. I would like to honor them for the source of inspiration they were and still are for a life of dedication to God and his church, and to concrete everyday life. I am grateful for their unwavering confidence in whatever I undertook and for their encouragement.

Among Ph.D. students the laments about our supervisors is a recurring trope. I have nothing to contribute to these laments. George Harinck, thank you for reading my texts, answering my emails, for asking “How are you?” and listening carefully to my answer, and for meeting with me as often as I needed to. Thank you for teaching me how to write and think clearly and for reminding me that I am a theologian, not a historian. The way you are deeply committed to both history and the present is exemplary. Rich Mouw, I am very grateful for all that you did to bring me to Fuller Seminary. Thank you for making time to meet, for warm and inspiring conversations, and for pertinent feedback. Thank you for teaching me by example the necessary balancing act between common grace and particular grace, between ‘Kuyper’ and ‘Schilder’, between deeply caring for and learning from the world, while being firmly rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Without a doubt, Kampen is the best place in the world to complete a Ph.D. in neo-Calvinism studies. The tradition is in the walls, the library is excellent, and I was surrounded by experts. In particular, I would like to mention Koert van Bekkum and Ad de Bruijne for many conversations and comments on earlier drafts. Your knowledge of the neo-Calvinist tradition and your sharp minds were a great help. The research group in which I participated, Reformed Traditions in Secular Europe, proved a fruitful environment for the exchange of ideas and the discussion of proposals and chapters. Not on record, but just as inspiring, was the attic of the university where Kampen’s Ph.D. students huddle together

to eat, pray, support, and debate together. I would also like to mention the Historical Seminar and other activities of the *Nederlandse Onderzoeksschool voor Theologie en Religiewetenschap* (NOSTER) in which I participated for two years. Thanks to all of you who provided valuable feedback on earlier versions and for sharing with me in the vicissitudes of life as a Ph.D. student.

I am also indebted to two unofficial Schilder-scholars who are among the best. I would like to express my gratitude to Wim van der Schee for many conversations and for sharing invaluable material with me, and to Jaap Schaeffer for two memorable stays in the German Vulkaneifel and the meticulous comments he provided on my manuscript. My seven months' stay at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena was only possible through generous funding from *The Institute for Faith and Public Life*, *Stichting De Honderd Gulden Reis*, *Het Greijdanus-Kruithoff Fonds*, *Het Jagtspoelfonds*, and the *Ridderlijke Duitse Orde Balijs van Utrecht*. Staying abroad teaches you how much hospitality matters. Thank you, Grace Pasadena Presbyterian, for making us feel at home. Thanks also to all the friends from Fuller Seminary in the broadest sense. Our Schilder reading group was memorable and immensely helpful.

Thanks to Albert Gootjes for greatly improving the English (and sometimes more) of this study. Likewise to Margreet Pel for the Dutch of the summary. Maarten Boersema, thank you for running down from the pulpit of the Herengrachtkerk in Leiden, where Schilder often preached, to take a photo of congregants leaving the church into the world. I am grateful to Carine de Jong for invaluable help in the design of the cover.

Mom and Dad, thank you for teaching me love, confidence, and curiosity, and for setting me on the path of the wonderful world of faith—and also for checking the proofs. Mom and Hilde, thank you for all the hours you have taken care of our daughters. Maria and Bregtje, thank you for distracting me with your laughter and tears, and for always vigorously drawing me into the present. Wibbina, the words to express my gratitude for your presence in my life are nobody's business. Here I just want to thank you for enduring Schilder, for many helpful conversations intellectually, spiritually, and mentally, for making room for my frustrations and fears, my ambition and my ardor.

Soli Deo Gloria, in the hope that, “Auch mit gedämpften, schwachen Stimmen // Wird Gottes Majestät verehrt”.¹

Marinus de Jong
Amsterdam-Bijlmermeer, Lent 2019

¹Aria from the cantate “Schwingt freudig euch empor” (BWV 36) by J.S. Bach. Text probably by Picander (Christian Friedrich Henrici).

Questioning the Ecclesial Turn

1.1 Introduction

Ever since Christian communities started taking shape, there has been an understanding of them as being “aliens and exiles” (1 Peter 2:11) in the world. And, in the words of John, “the love of the Father is not in those who love the world” (1 John 2:15). There is therefore somehow a border, a distinction between the church and what is not the church, the world. In the history of Christianity this relationship has been understood in different ways. In the first centuries, the opposition and persecutions Christians faced meant that this border was often sharp. Yet from the fourth century onwards, the Constantinian conversion brought about a great change in this relationship. According to some the boundaries were blurred to the detriment of the church and the gospel it proclaimed. During this period of ‘Christendom’, the awareness of the borders remained visible in monastic movements of protest and withdrawal, for example, and also in the persistent strife between the earthly and the spiritual sword that could be seen throughout the Middle Ages. In the modern era the intertwined nature of the relationship between church and state became increasingly problematic in the West. The process of separation and a marking of the boundaries between church and world is still ongoing, and in the ‘post-Christendom’-state of the West today the questions of the relationship between church and world are showing themselves to be of a renewed urgency. Indeed, “*the* key question for ecclesiologists in a postmodern context is their understanding of the relationship of the church to the wider ‘world’.”¹

The main purpose of this study is to offer a contribution to the ongoing reflection on this relationship between the church and the world. This contri-

¹G. Mannion. “Postmodern Ecclesiologies”. In: *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*. Ed. by L. S. Mudge and G. Mannion. London; New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 131.

bution is sought in the thought of the neo-Calvinist theologian Klaas Schilder (1890-1952) concerning the church. The main body of this work constitutes an analysis of his thought in its historical context. It is not undertaken out of historical interest alone, but from a systematic theological interest in contributing to contemporary reflection. For this reason, it is necessary to explain why Schilder's thought is worth exploring.

1.1.1 Schilder's Neo-Calvinism

A first step for elucidating the relevance of Schilder's thought can be taken by situating him within the Dutch neo-Calvinist theological tradition in which he stood. Neo-Calvinism is a theological movement within the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (Dutch Reformed Church) that was initiated by the statesman, journalist, and theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) in the second half of the nineteenth century.² Although it started as a protest movement in the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, it gradually evolved into an ecclesial, political, and societal movement with a web of institutions: a church (the *Gereformeerde Kerken*), a newspaper, a political party, and a university.³ Together with the dogmatician and ethicist Herman Bavinck (1854-1921), Kuyper developed a theology that sought to revive orthodox Calvinism in modern times, eschewing the liberalism of mainline Protestantism on the one hand and world evading pietism on the other. Hallmarks of the movement were its free-church ecclesiology and its distinct theology of cultural engagement, combined with a theological orthodoxy in a distinctly modern hue. Although Kuyper and Bavinck explicitly sought to stand in the line of Calvin, they rightly referred to themselves *Neo-Calvinist*. Both Bavinck and Kuyper were trained at the modernist-liberal faculty of Leiden under Scholten and Kuenen. While they distanced themselves from their mentors, the influence of the latter men still extends deep into the thought of their one-time pupils. It is this combination of nineteenth-century philosophy and Calvinist orthodoxy that gives neo-Calvinism its distinct character.⁴

For describing the church's relationship to the world, Kuyper and Bavinck devised the doctrine of 'common grace' which they squeezed out of the pages

²See glossary and chart (A.1) for more background on the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*.

³*Gereformeerde Kerken* translates as 'Reformed Churches in the Netherlands'. To avoid confusion I will not translate the names of the different Dutch denominations. See again the glossary and chart (A.1) for more background on the different churches.

⁴For Kuyper, see J. D. Bratt. *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*. Library of Religious Biography Series. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013. For Bavinck, see J. P. Eglinton. *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif*. T & T Clark, 2012.

of Calvin's *Institutes*.⁵ With this doctrine, Kuyper could both legitimize a theologically orthodox church that was clearly separated from the state and main-line Protestantism, and become engaged in the academy, the arts, and politics. Common grace meant that God's grace in Christ was not only aimed at saving the elect, but also pertained to God's entire creation, preventing it from a total collapse as a result of the fall. By positing such divine grace, Kuyper had a theological argument to engage with 'the world', to value art, to collaborate in politics, and to learn from other religions.⁶ A second theological tool for neo-Calvinism's cultural engagement is the notion of 'sphere sovereignty'. According to Kuyper, God had created the world with different spheres: the state, the church, the family, the academy etc. These spheres were all governed by their respective proper laws and principles; each sphere had its own sovereignty, which it received from the sovereign over all the spheres, Jesus Christ. This explains the Kuyperian catchphrase: "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine".⁷ By the time Kuyper and Bavinck died in the 1920s, this theology of cultural engagement had materialized in a free church consisting of about ten percent of the Dutch population, a political party with considerable influence, a daily national newspaper, a Reformed university with three faculties, and much more. Kuyper left behind a church and a theology, rooted in orthodox Calvinism, with a distinctly modern hue and a strong cultural engagement in the life of the world.

The past decades have witnessed an increase in popular and academic interest in this theological tradition, most clearly visible in the raft of translations of works by Kuyper and Bavinck into English, as well as Spanish and Korean.⁸ It

⁵See J. Douma. *Algemene genade*. 1966 (ET J. Douma. *Common Grace in Kuyper, Schilder, and Calvin: Exposition, Comparison, and Evaluation*. Ed. by W. Helder. Trans. by A. H. Oosterhoff. Lucerna, 2017) for a balanced account of the relationship between Calvin and Kuyper on the point of common grace. Douma emphasizes both continuity and discontinuity.

⁶For common grace, see H. Bavinck. *De Algemeene Genade. Rede gehouden bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Theol. School te Kampen op 6 December 1894*. Kampen: Zalsman, 1894 (ET H. Bavinck. "Common Grace". Trans. by R. V. Leeuwen. In: *Calvin Theological Journal* 24.1 (1989), pp. 38–65) and A. Kuyper. *De gemeene gratie. Eerste deel. Het geschiedkundig gedeelte*. 4th ed. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1902 (ET A. Kuyper. *Common Grace: God's Gifts for a Fallen World. Volume 1: The Historical Section*. Ed. by J. J. Ballor and S. J. Grabill. Trans. by N. D. Kloosterman and E. M. van der Maas. Lexham Press, 2015) and A. Kuyper. *Het Calvinisme. Zes Stone-lezingen, in October 1898 te Princeton (N.-J.) gehouden*. 2nd ed. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1925 (ET A. Kuyper. *The L.P. Stone Lectures for 1898-1899: Calvinism. Six Lectures Delivered in the Theological Seminary at Princeton*. New York/Chicago/Boston: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1899).

⁷"en geen duimbreed is er op heel 't erf van ons menscheijk leven, waarvan de Christus, die aller Souverein is, niet roept: 'Mijn!'" (A. Kuyper. *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring: rede ter inwijding van de Vrije Universiteit den 20sten October 1880 gehouden in het koor der Nieuwe Kerk te Amsterdam*. Amsterdam: J.H. Kruyt, 1880, p. 35).

⁸For an overview of neo-Calvinism as a global movement, see G. Harinck. "Van Nederland

is precisely the unique combination of orthodox (Reformed) doctrine, a free church in a pluralist society, and a theology of cultural engagement that is attracting increasing attention. Kuyper's doctrine of common grace and the concept of sphere sovereignty form the heart of the interest in the neo-Calvinist tradition. The neo-Calvinist tradition therefore found creative, new ways for describing the relationship between church and world. The contemporary interest in this tradition serves to confirm the relevance of these efforts.

While Bavinck and Kuyper were the founding fathers of neo-Calvinism, the tradition was also continued by subsequent generations of philosophers and theologians who consciously placed themselves in the line of Bavinck and Kuyper. Famous examples are the systematic theologian Gerrit Berkouwer (1903-1996), the philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977), and the missiologist Johan Bavinck (1895-1964). This is also the place where Klaas Schilder must be situated, namely a second generation of neo-Calvinist thinkers who did not simply copy, but sought rather to critically engage and build upon the work of their spiritual forefathers. Just as importantly, it is precisely at the points where neo-Calvinism trod new ground and continues to attract attention that Schilder critically engaged the neo-Calvinist tradition: the nature of the church, and the rationale for its engagement with the world. Schilder puts Kuyper in conversation with the question posed by the new age of the post-WWI western world, of increasing secularization, of the rise of fascism and communism, and, on the theological level, of the challenges of that other neo-orthodox theology of Karl Barth. Bavinck scholar James Eglinton puts it this way: "The international study of developments in Dutch neo-Calvinism would be incomplete without Schilder."⁹ Schilder as an exponent of this creative tradition is the first reason why this study seeks to blow the dust from the vast corpus of this pastor-theologian.

1.1.2 Schilder as a Reformed Hauerwas?

A second step further substantiates the relevance of Schilder for the present investigation. In an article published in 2003, Richard Mouw, one of the leading advocates of neo-Calvinist thought in North America, writes about Schilder and his book entitled *Christ and Culture*. He laments the fact that there has been very little attention for Schilder in North America to date. Mouw explains that this is so lamentable since "Schilder's views on Christ and culture

naar Amerika. Neocalvinisme in internationaal perspectief." In: *Radix* 44.3 (2018), pp. 224–236. For recent translations, see the bibliography appended to this thesis.

⁹J. P. Eglinton. "Schilder als eenentwintigste-eeuws exportproduct". In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, p. 192.

are quite pertinent to present-day discussion in North America regarding the proper mode of involvement in public life”.¹⁰ Mouw believes that Schilder can offer a corrective to the at times overly triumphalist and accommodationist way in which Abraham Kuyper engaged with culture. In that sense, Mouw writes, Schilder may have “some important similarities to the Anabaptist type thinking of Stanley Hauerwas and others”¹¹ More concretely, Mouw points to what he had described as Schilder’s “abstinence option”.¹² While cultural engagement may be the norm set by the cultural mandate, forms of “heroic abstinence” can and will be necessary, and priorities will need to be established when the church has limited options.¹³ It is also Schilder’s apocalyptic reading of his time, Mouw remarks, that forms the backdrop to his cultural pessimism. As to cultural engagement itself, Schilder seeks to avoid the language of common grace, and rather speaks of ‘common restraint’. According to Schilder, God restrains the forces of evil that destroy rather than develop culture. Cooperation between Christians and non-Christians is understood by Schilder in terms of God the Creator, in distinction from the true fellowship given in Christ alone. It is on this point of cooperation, for which Schilder uses the term *sunousia*, that Mouw sees a necessary correction for Hauerwas.¹⁴ On the basis of his reading of Schilder’s *Christ and Culture*, Mouw understands him as a promising figure for advancing the debate around Hauerwas on the relationship between the church and the world, while at the same time offering important correctives to contemporary Kuyperian public theology. However, so Mouw goes on to suggest, “Schilder needs an American ‘translator-interpreter’—someone capable of the difficult task of recontextualizing his thoughts for a new situation.”¹⁵

Calvin College philosopher James K.A. Smith offers hints similar to Mouw. In his discussion of Radical Orthodoxy’s one-sided opposition to the state, Smith first brings up Dooyeweerd and Kuyper. Yet thereafter he suggests that a “third way may be found in a new appropriation of the work of Klaas Schilder”.¹⁶

¹⁰R. J. Mouw. “Klaas Schilder as Public Theologian”. In: *Calvin Theological Journal* 38 (2003), pp. 281–298, p. 281.

¹¹Mouw, “Klaas Schilder as Public Theologian”, p. 287.

¹²R. J. Mouw. *He Shines in All That’s Fair: Culture and Common Grace : The 2000 Stob Lectures*. The Stob Lectures 2000. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001, pp. 78–80.

¹³This idea of the “abstinence option” is taken up by Kyle Bennett in his dissertation, where he applies it to the practice of fasting (K. D. Bennett. “Involved Withdrawal, a Phenomenology of Fasting”. PhD Thesis. Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 2013, pp. 115–123); see also K. D. Bennett. *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World*. Brazos Press, 2017, pp. 39–58.

¹⁴R. J. Mouw. *Adventures in Evangelical Civility*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016, pp. 97–98.

¹⁵Mouw, “Klaas Schilder as Public Theologian”, p. 288.

¹⁶J. K. A. Smith. *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology*. Authentic Media, 2004, p. 256.

Smith believes “that Schilder sketches a Reformed understanding of cultural engagement that can make sense of a ‘Reformed monasticism’. And in this regard, I think Schilder is more faithful to John Calvin than the Kuyperians who want to claim Calvin’s mantle.”¹⁷ By identifying Schilder with what he calls ‘Reformed monasticism’, Smith draws attention to the centrality of the church in Schilder’s thought. Smith sees in Schilder a call for the church just to be the church, instead of triumphalistically seeking to transform the world.

Smith’s intuition of an ecclesiocentric element in Schilder’s theology finds further confirmation in Schilder’s historical circumstances. Schilder thought and wrote about the church in the Interwar period, a time marked by the shock of the Great War and, beginning in the 1930s, by economic crisis. Society and church also faced the surge of life-encompassing ideologies such as fascism, Nazism, and communism. The church was therefore forced to find new ways to relate to society, different from the way Schilder’s neo-Calvinist forebears had done. For the first time in history, the church had to relate to a secular culture. Writing about the theology of Karl Barth, which was developed in that same time, Barth-scholar Georg Pfeiderer similarly writes: “Presumably, the theological solutions that were developed in the Weimar crisis and its wake can potentially be of contemporary significance.”¹⁸ Unsurprisingly, the doctrine of the church became a key theological topic. Otto Dibelius prophetically spoke of the ‘Jahrhundert der Kirche’.¹⁹ Barth wrote a “*Kirchliche Dogmatik*”, and Bonhoeffer understood Christ “*als Gemeinde existierend*”. In the first half of the twentieth century, the position of the church within society had to be subjected to a profound reconsideration. Schilder, standing in the neo-Calvinist tradition of Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck, was aware of this need but made his ‘ecclesial turn’ in opposition to Karl Barth. As Mouw and Smith indicate, and as further confirmed by Schilder’s own historical context, Schilder combines a deep concern for the church in turbulent and anti-Christian times with a neo-Calvinist theology of cultural engagement. Accordingly, the present study seeks to delve into the world of Klaas Schilder in order to discover how he understands the relationship between the church and the world.

This dissertation examines Klaas Schilder’s thinking on the relationship be-

¹⁷J. K. A. Smith. “Reformed Monasticism”. In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, pp. 197–204, p. 200.

¹⁸“dann darf auch vermutet werden, dass die theologischen Problemlösungsmodelle, die in Umfeld der Kulturkrise von Weimar und in Reaktion auf sie entwickelt worden sind, zumindest hintergründig von aktueller Bedeutung sein könnten.” (G. Pfeiderer. *Karl Barths praktische Theologie: zu Genese und Kontext eines paradigmatischen Entwurfs systematischer Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert*. Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 115. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000, p. 5).

¹⁹O. Dibelius. *Das Jahrhundert der Kirche: Geschichte, Betrachtung, Umschau und Ziele*. 6th ed. Berlin: Furcht, 1928.

tween the church and the world. It is undertaken out of the conviction that his thought is relevant for contemporary debates. As Mouw and Smith have already suggested, Schilder's thought resonates with the ideas of Stanley Hauerwas. Hauerwas's emphasis on the church is part of a broader movement that is identified as an 'ecclesial turn' in theology. While the main focus of this study will be on Schilder's thought, it will also seek tentatively to connect his thought to a contemporary debate. Following the intuition of Mouw and Smith, I will take the debate surrounding the ecclesial turn as a point of entry. I will not offer a full comparison between Schilder and Hauerwas. Rather, I will use Hauerwas to formulate questions for Schilder that will guide our discussion. At the end I will briefly return to Hauerwas, coming back full circle by asking Hauerwas questions that have arisen from our survey of Schilder's thought. By continuing the "family argument" between Anabaptism and Calvinism in this way,²⁰ I hope to take a first step towards lifting Schilder from history and tentatively introducing him into contemporary debates. It is to this contemporary debate that I now turn.

1.2 The Ecclesial Turn

In the past decades, many have discerned a so-called 'ecclesial turn' in reflection on the relationship between the church and the world. The coining of this term is usually credited to Luke Bretherton, who used it for the new move in theological reflection he outlined in his book *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*.²¹ Bretherton identifies Oliver and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, Stanley Hauerwas, William Cavanaugh, and John Milbank as representatives of this movement. The ecclesial turn means that the church, according to these writers, should not play by the rules of the state set by the ideas of liberal democracy, but by its own rules. "It is not up to the state to determine when, where and in what voice the church may speak", as Cavanaugh summarized his position in an earlier article.²² The church's political vision ought to be derived from itself, or, to use the words of Hauerwas, "the church has its own politics".²³ In his *Becoming a Christian in Christendom*, Jason Mahn describes the turn with a somewhat broader range, including in it "Hauerwas, Yoder, 'postliberal theo-

²⁰Mouw, *He Shines in All That's Fair*, p. 22 and Mouw, *Adventures in Evangelical Civility*, pp. 93-96.

²¹L. Bretherton. *Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness*. Chichester etc.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, pp. 16-18.

²²L. Bretherton. "A New Establishment? Theological Politics and the Emerging Shape of Church-State Relations". In: *Political Theology* 7.3 (2006-07), pp. 371-392, p. 385.

²³Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, p. 17.

gians', new monastic communities, and the Ekklesia Project".²⁴ Nevertheless, his description remains similar to that of Bretherton in that he too states "that the first social task of the church is simply to be the church, a community set apart from dominant politics in order to witness to a different way of being together".²⁵ Tom Noakes-Duncan devoted his *Communities of Restoration* to the application of what he calls "the ecclesial turn in Christian Ethics" to a practice of justice.²⁶ His list of representatives includes the likes of Stanley Hauerwas, Alasdair MacIntyre, and John Milbank, and, as their historical background, Karl Barth, John Howard Yoder, Sam Wells, and William Cavanaugh.²⁷ Noakes-Duncan describes this turn as a "broad trend – a view of the church as an alternative community; resistance to co-option by a worldly wisdom, expressed through liturgical practices; and the singling out of nonviolence as the heart of Christian witness."²⁸

In the Dutch context, the ecclesial turn has been popularized by a collection of interviews with its representatives. In this collection, the same main names figure: Stanley Hauerwas, William Cavanaugh, Oliver O'Donovan, and John Milbank. Nevertheless, the scope of this collection is broader in that it also includes Brian Brock, Miroslav Volf, and Tim Keller.²⁹ Having acknowledged that the 'ecclesial turn' as they see it is broad and vague, including theologians from considerably different backgrounds who might very well be unhappy at being grouped together under this one heading, the volume editors attempt to establish a set of characteristics uniting the interviewed representatives: "First of all, they underline the proper character of the church and its narrative. They are fed up with the liberal mantra that the church should seek to connect to society in order to maintain its relevance."³⁰ Moreover, in their view the nature of the church is understood as a community with a particular practice, rather than an institution with a certain doctrine. The church is a "moral community".³¹ In their Christian Dogmatics, Gijsbert van den Brink and Kees van der Kooi describe the same ecclesial turn under the heading of the church as a 'contrast

²⁴J. A. Mahn. *Becoming a Christian in Christendom: Radical Discipleship and the Way of the Cross in America's Christian Culture*. Fortress Press, 2016, p. 146.

²⁵Mahn, *Becoming a Christian in Christendom*, p. 146.

²⁶T. Noakes-Duncan. *Communities of Restoration: Ecclesial Ethics and Restorative Justice*. T & T Clark, 2017, p. 48.

²⁷Noakes-Duncan, *Communities of Restoration*, pp. 48-85.

²⁸Noakes-Duncan, *Communities of Restoration*, pp. 48-49.

²⁹H. J. Paul and B. T. Wallet. *Oefenplaatsen: tegendraadse theologen over kerk en ethiek*. Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2012, pp. 7-24.

³⁰"Om te beginnen onderstrepen ze de eigenheid van de kerk en haar verhaal. Ze hebben genoeg van de liberale mantra dat de kerk op straffe van relevantieverlies 'aansluiting' bij de samenleving moet zoeken." (Paul and Wallet, *Oefenplaatsen*, p. 12).

³¹Paul and Wallet, *Oefenplaatsen*, p. 12.

society³², and rightly include the Reformed theologian Bram Van de Beek as a Dutch representative of this turn.³³ Van de Beek's volume on ecclesiology is a clear attempt to restore the church as the heart of the Christian life. As such, it comes as no surprise that Van de Beek explicitly endorses Hauerwas.³⁴

1.2.1 Hauerwas's Ecclesial Turn

Before we can address the issues raised by the ecclesial turn, we will first have to narrow our scope. As we saw above, the ecclesial turn can be interpreted very broadly. It encompasses theologians from different countries and traditions with very different interests. Some even extend it as far back in time as Karl Barth and his *Church Dogmatics*. However, perhaps the most prominent figure of the ecclesial turn is Stanley Hauerwas, as also recognized by Noakes-Duncan and Luke Bretherton.³⁵ Hauerwas's prominence is further confirmed by the fact that he is the only one whose name is mentioned without fail whenever people describe the ecclesial turn. This prominence can be explained by his provocative style and the accessibility of his writing, especially when compared to O'Donovan or Milbank. Furthermore, Hauerwas was first: His *A Community of Character* appeared in 1981, well before O'Donovan's *The Desire of the Nations* in 1996 or Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory* in 1991. For these reasons, the engagement will be narrowed down to the work of Stanley Hauerwas, with occasional side references to the broader movement.

What are the issues that the turn to the church as described above has raised? If there is a turn to something, there must also be a turn from something else. In the case of Hauerwas it is first and foremost a turn from a Christianity that has become entangled with the state. Hauerwas considers Constantinianism the major problem of modern Christianity's entanglement with the world. For him, the fact that the church became the official state church was a disastrous event that eventually made the church lose its particularity, its unique witness to Christ and the gospel. This can be seen, for instance, in the church's support for the crusades (Hauerwas is an outspoken pacifist), in the church allying with

³²G. van den Brink and C. van der Kooi. *Christelijke dogmatiek*. 5th ed. Boekencentrum, 2015, pp. 572-573 (ET G. van den Brink and C. van der Kooi. *Christian Dogmatics: An Introduction*. Trans. by R. Bruinsma and J. D. Bratt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017, pp. 572-644).

³³See also A. L. T. de Bruijne. "Niet van deze wereld: de hedendaagse gereformeerde publieke theologie en de 'doperse optie'". In: *Theologia Reformata* 4 (2011), pp. 366-390, p. 368, who also mentions Van de Beek as a part of what he calls the 'Anabaptist option' in recent political theology, alongside Yoder, Hauerwas, and Cavanaugh.

³⁴A. van de Beek. *Lichaam en Geest van Christus*. Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2012, pp. 132-140.

³⁵Bretherton, *Christianity and Contemporary Politics*, p. 17 and Noakes-Duncan, *Communities of Restoration*, pp. 50-52.

Nazi Germany, and the church supporting the bombing of Hiroshima. And even in contemporary America this entanglement can be seen in both liberal and conservative political engagement. Hauerwas writes about the church: "It is very public, very political, very social in that it depicts the public form by which the colony shall witness to the world that God is really busy redeeming humanity, reconciling the world to himself in Christ."³⁶ Thus Hauerwas's ecclesial turn is a turn from a church and state alliance towards a church that is free and sets its own agenda and has (or is) its own politics.

But there is more to the turn in its epistemological consequences. The church becomes the key epistemological factor to the knowledge of God. Hauerwas, being an ethicist, writes that "any Christian ethical position is made credible by the church".³⁷ Faith is not something you write down, faith is something that is lived in a concrete community. Dogmatics is swallowed up by ethics and ethics by ecclesiology. It should come as no surprise that Karl Barth is Hauerwas's great example. "One of Barth's greatest virtues was the courage to say what he knew needed to be said before he had figured out how to defend it."³⁸ The *Church Dogmatics* are for Hauerwas one big witness of what it means just to start speaking about God, without prolegomena, without beginning or end, something that is only possible within the church. "The Christian claim is that life is better lived in the church because the church, according to our story, just happens to be true".³⁹ Hauerwas's ecclesial turn is also a turn from an objective, foundational epistemology based on Scripture towards a more communitarian understanding of how we know God. He writes: "Fundamentalism and biblical criticism seek to depoliticize the interpretation of Scripture on the grounds that the text has objective meaning."⁴⁰ Instead, the church is the one that has to read Scripture. More than that, the text itself does not exist, but only exists as the canons of the church. Therefore, "no task is more important than for the Church to take the Bible out of the hands of individual Christians in North America", Hauerwas provocatively writes.⁴¹ The church has epistemic priority, not any supposedly objective interpretation of the Bible, whether liberal or fundamentalist.

Before we turn to the critique, it is important to note the twofold attraction

³⁶S. Hauerwas and W. H. Willimon. *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony : A Provocative Christian Assessment of Culture and Ministry for People Who Know That Something Is Wrong*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989, p. 92.

³⁷Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, p. 70.

³⁸S. Hauerwas. *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church's Witness and Natural Theology : Being the Gifford Lectures Delivered at the University of St. Andrews in 2001*. Gifford lectures 2001. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2001, p. 144.

³⁹Hauerwas and Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, p. 77.

⁴⁰S. Hauerwas. *Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993, p. 18.

⁴¹Hauerwas, *Unleashing the Scripture*, p. 15.

of this ecclesial turn as voiced by Hauerwas. First, it offers a robust anchor for Christians in a time where secularization is pervasive. When the Bible in particular finds itself under increasing pressure, the church offers a place of refuge and certainty. In doing so, it goes beyond a modernist and overly rational treatment of faith. It stresses practice over doctrine, virtues over ethical principles, and community over institution. These emphases fit postmodern sensibilities like a glove. Second, Hauerwas addresses a deep, unresolved tension within Reformed ecclesiology. This tension has existed ever since the reformers departed from the Roman Catholic high ecclesiology, where the visible, hierarchical-institutional church was *the* church outside of which there was no salvation. Theologically, the church seemed no longer as indispensable as it had been before, even though the Reformed themselves argued to the contrary. Maybe the most striking example is contemporary American evangelicalism which, according to some, “has no ecclesiology”, while others go so far as to suggest that “evangelical ecclesiology is an oxymoron”.⁴² The ecclesial turn is an attractive alternative and addresses a centuries old problem in Protestant ecclesiology that is especially problematic in American evangelicalism. There are, however, also significant problems.

1.2.2 Hauerwas’s Turn Under Critique

Hauerwas’s critics have often understood this turn ‘from the world’ as a sectarian withdrawal, famously called the ‘sectarian temptation’ by James Gustafson, who at one time was Hauerwas’s own teacher. Critics like Gustafson question whether the church will still have any legibility and credibility in the wider world, and whether engagement with the world has been rendered impossible. Will the church become a self-justifying tribe whose knowledge and claims can never be corrected from the outside, thereby falling into complete isolation? Theologically speaking, Gustafson suspects a flawed theology of creation and revelation in Hauerwas’s emphasis on the church. He writes: “And if creation is important in theology and ethics contemporary ways of knowing nature are important.”⁴³ The doctrine of creation implies a natural order that provides a certain common ground in epistemology and in morality. In making the church the unique epistemological principle, there is no room for conversation, mutual exchange, or engagement. The church has thus become a sect. Jeffrey Stout has voiced a similar critique repeating the charge of sectarianism. Stout argues that Hauerwas adopts the strict modern/tradition dualism of Alasdair MacIntyre, without really accounting for it. In Hauerwas, ‘liberalism’ and ‘modernity’ have

⁴²B. Harper and P. L. Metzger. *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction*. Brazos Press, 2009, p. 16.

⁴³J. M. Gustafson. “The Sectarian Temptation: Reflections on Theology, the Church and the University”. In: *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society* 40 (1985), pp. 83–94, p. 88.

become synonyms in designating contemporary society which is construed in essentially negative terms. This, combined with Yoder's Mennonite conception of the church, becomes "an especially rigid form of church/world dualism".⁴⁴ Stout worries that Hauerwas's reluctance to see anything but darkness and vice outside of the church, and the resulting denial of any common ground to work for justice, will make "matters worse, both for democracy and for the church".⁴⁵

Another frequently evoked critique on Hauerwas's turn as a turn from the world has also been voiced by Gustafson, and more recently by Nicholas Healy. The question at stake is how realistic Hauerwas's church is. Gustafson writes about Hauerwas: "Theologians who succumb to the sectarian temptation assume, *sociologically*, that the Church or the Christian community is socially and culturally isolable from the wider society and culture of which it is a part."⁴⁶ However, Gustafson goes on, such ghetto-like communities that are entirely separate from the world cannot exist and have never existed in history. Healy echoes Gustafson's critique when he asks, "Is the church what he says it is? Could it ever be what he says it must be?"⁴⁷ Healy furthermore demands attention for the category of 'unsatisfactory Christians', those at the edges of the church who are part of it, but do not belong to the radically engaged core members. These people do not fit Hauerwas's very demanding idea of the church and cannot bear the theological weight he places on the church. Instead of the stories Hauerwas keeps telling about churches that exemplify what he argues, Healy would have us consider the results of ethnographic study. These provide a more nuanced image of the church that does not fit the contrast communities Hauerwas has in mind: "They suggest instead that the church is not apart from the world, nor could it ever be so, but is thoroughly within and of the world."⁴⁸

⁴⁴J. L. Stout. "Not of This World: Stanley Hauerwas and the Fate of Democracy". In: *Commonweal* 130.17 (2003), pp. 14–20, p. 17.

⁴⁵The charge of sectarianism is echoed in a criticism voiced against John Milbank, another representative of the ecclesial turn. Shakespeare, for example, writes about Milbank: "This theology seems to deny that creation can participate in or reflect the will of God apart from the church. This is not only theologically questionable, it puts barriers in the way of practically working with others for the common good." (S. Shakespeare. *Radical Orthodoxy: A Critical Introduction*. London: SPCK., 2007, p. 93). See also C. J. Insole. "Against Radical Orthodoxy: The Dangers of Overcoming Political Liberalism". In: *Modern Theology* 20.2 (2004), pp. 213–241.

⁴⁶Gustafson, "The Sectarian Temptation", p. 90.

⁴⁷N. M. Healy. *Hauerwas: A (Very) Critical Introduction*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014, p. 72.

⁴⁸Healy, *Hauerwas*, p. 98 See also Healy's influential book, *Church, World, and the Christian Life*. There he similarly argues that "Ecclesiology is misguided if it attempts to construct, on the basis of a single model or principle, a systematic blueprint for the church that applies normatively always and everywhere. [...] Ecclesiology should be expanded by incorporating critical analyses of the concrete church ..." (N. M. Healy. *Church, World, and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic*

Hauerwas's answer to Gustafson in 1988 is, I think, partly satisfactorily, while it at the same time affirms Gustafson's very concern. Hauerwas explicitly denies that he aims at withdrawal or 'sectarianism'. But the ghost of sectarianism has kept haunting Hauerwas, since thirty years later he still finds himself forced, somewhat tired, to deny this charge again. To underline his denial Hauerwas rightly points to his engagement with many issues 'in the world': medical and juridical profession, nuclear issues, etc. In contrast to what Gustafson suggests, there is indeed a middle way between complete withdrawal and complete engagement. That is precisely what Hauerwas wants: "Selective participation" from a church that is able to keep its own identity. For example, when the state uses violence, there is reason not to engage. But this never implies withdrawal. On the contrary, "pacifism demands strenuous political engagement".⁴⁹ Furthermore, Hauerwas denies that he believes Christians should only be part of one community. Christians are and should be in many different communities: sports, the state, the university, etc. In these communities Christians should learn to set priorities, and that can only be done "in and through the church".⁵⁰ Max Stackhouse is not convinced by Hauerwas's response. He draws attention to Hauerwas's lack of attention for institutions in the 'world' that are not the church, like the family, schools, the arts, and medical care, which are not only profoundly shaped by Christianity but in their present day shape also require a theology that acknowledges the good in those institutions. "The problem of sin is not between church and world, but within both. And the possibilities of redemption are not for the church only, but for the world also, which 'God so loved....'", Stackhouse affirms.⁵¹

On the other hand, when Hauerwas responds to Gustafson's critique alleging a misguided doctrine of creation, the answer is less convincing, as Hauerwas himself seems to acknowledge. Hauerwas replies that the issue here is not the doctrine of creation, because he takes that doctrine merely to explain "what started it all".⁵² If we look for common ground for morality or for a natural order, we have to look at God's kingdom, not the doctrine of creation. Creation is a "christological claim"⁵³, an "eschatological act that binds nature and history together".⁵⁴ A few years later Hauerwas treated the issue of creation in greater

Ecclesiology. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 50).

⁴⁹S. Hauerwas. "Why the Sectarian Temptation Is a Misrepresentation: A Response to James Gustafson". In: *The Hauerwas Reader*. Ed. by J. Berkman and M. G. Cartwright. Durham, NC etc.: Duke University Press, 2001, p. 105.

⁵⁰Hauerwas, "A Response to Gustafson", p. 106.

⁵¹M. L. Stackhouse. "In the Company of Hauerwas". In: *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 2.1 (1997).

⁵²Hauerwas, "A Response to Gustafson", p. 108.

⁵³Hauerwas, "A Response to Gustafson", p. 107.

⁵⁴Hauerwas, "A Response to Gustafson", p. 108.

depth. He now writes that “Christians cannot read ‘image of God’ in Genesis 1 apart from what it means for them to be ‘image of Christ’”. And, “the church finds in Jesus not simply the restorer of a lost creation known separately from Jesus himself, but rather in Jesus the church discovers the very nature of the created order.” Creation is also an eschatological confession: “The original creation is aimed at a new creation”.⁵⁵ For Hauerwas, creation is not a doctrine that provides a rationale for common ground or a common language with those outside of the faith. When Hauerwas writes about natural theology in his 2001 Gifford Lectures, he confirms this and sides with Karl Barth who would only speak of natural theology after he has started speaking of God and his revelation in Christ. Hauerwas approvingly quotes Barth: “Revelation does not exclude but includes natural religion.”⁵⁶ The first article of the Apostolic Creed should thus never be isolated from the second article, or, in other words, it is deceiving to “provide an account of creation abstracted from election in Christ in an effort to make our faith generally available.”⁵⁷ If I read Hauerwas well, he just does not seem interested in finding any common ground or general revelation, since he believes such concepts to be abstract from the concrete life of Christians. In his view this does not separate him from the world or keep him from engaging with it. The Christians within the church are convinced that they serve the Creator of all and will thus never lose interest for the world. However, the search for common ground is, I think, for Hauerwas another form of Constantinianism, of playing by the rules of the secular order.⁵⁸ This is the reason why for Hauerwas it does not make sense to accuse him of withdrawal or sectarianism. For Hauerwas his ecclesial turn only means a withdrawal from the secular state, from forms of Constantinianism, and, through that, a return to the world.

In some sense the entire enterprise of Hauerwas’s Gifford Lectures is an attempt “to show that Christian practice and theology are neither self-referential nor self-justifying”,⁵⁹ or in Gustafson’s words, to show that his church is not a sect. It seems to me that Hauerwas, while indeed showing that his ecclesial turn is not ‘sectarian’ in the sense that it is not concerned with the world, still only affirms Gustafson’s concern about an ‘isolated’ epistemology and ethics.

More recently, the Roman Catholic theologian Nicholas Healy has raised another issue with regard to Hauerwas’s ecclesial turn in which he draws attention to its epistemological consequences. Hauerwas’s ecclesiocentrism is, in Healy’s view, in discontinuity with what he calls ‘traditional theology’. In

⁵⁵S. Hauerwas. *In Good Company: The Church as Polis*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995, pp. 194-196.

⁵⁶Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe*, p. 163.

⁵⁷Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe*, p. 183.

⁵⁸Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe*, p. 216.

⁵⁹Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe*, p. 207.

traditional theology, Healy claims, God rather than the church used to be the center of theology, “logically, epistemologically, agentially, and ontologically”.⁶⁰ In this sense Hauerwas is a modern theologian like Schleiermacher. For, even though he does so in a different manner, Schleiermacher too places the church, rather than God, at the heart of his theology. Both start with a social-philosophical definition of the church, rather than a theological one. For both, their ecclesiocentrism is a kind of atypical apologetical method. Healy’s main concern is therefore that it is not God himself, the content of belief, that is decisive for Hauerwas, and that those who believe and the concrete expression of their belief rather become essential. Hauerwas, Healy continues, conflates the logic of belief with the logic of coming to belief and of living out of beliefs, to the detriment of the first. Hauerwas’s account is thus “theologically thin”.⁶¹ It leans too much on MacIntyre and his social-philosophical definition of, for example, practice and tradition, rather than on a sound theological definition. Where Gustafson worries about the isolation of Hauerwas’s church from the world, Healy worries about its isolation from God. A consequence of this conflation is a distorted logic of belief, particularly visible in Hauerwas’s doctrine of Scripture. With Hauerwas, as we have also seen above, Scripture has no objective authority or meaning of its own. It needs to be read within the community of the church. This is very different from traditional theology, Healy continues, which has always assumed that “Scripture has some kind of meaning that is discernible by paying careful attention to the text”⁶². It thus prevents the church from controlling the Scriptures entirely. Scripture has greater meaning than just shaping the community of the church, since it also serves the individual in coming to know God. Hauerwas’s position consequently brings him into a conflicting position, Healy asserts. For what exactly provides him with the authority to take the critical-prophetic position he adopts? Why is it that the American individual named Stanley Hauerwas is allowed to interpret the Scriptures and to criticize the church?

When Hauerwas’s critics question his presentation of the gospel in terms of pacifism and virtue, we are provided with a concrete example of this deficiency in the doctrine of Scripture. Stout argues, as also others have done, that Hauerwas’s insistence on nonviolence as the singular trait of what the gospel means is not shown to be derived from Scripture. “Hauerwas’s theological ethic can succeed on its own terms only if it faithfully espouses the life and teaching of Jesus in its entirety”, instead of the present “extremely selective reading of the Bible”.⁶³ Stackhouse argues along similar lines when he asks Hauerwas how his

⁶⁰Healy, *Hauerwas*, p. 42.

⁶¹Healy, *Hauerwas*, p. 102.

⁶²Healy, *Hauerwas*, p. 60.

⁶³Stout, “Not of This World: Stanley Hauerwas and the Fate of Democracy”, p. 20.

emphasis on virtue ethics relates to the Torah, which clearly presents itself as a universal moral principle, and to the ethics in the New Testament, which are never expressed in terms of virtue.⁶⁴ While these claims by Stackhouse might be questionable, they do show that Hauerwas's doctrine of Scripture is a matter of concern with far reaching consequences.

In his response to Healy, Hauerwas acknowledges the validity of some of this criticism, while completely ignoring some other aspects.⁶⁵ He thus readily admits Healy's criticism of the conflation of the logic of belief and of the logic of the practice of belief. However, Hauerwas contests the claim that his thought lacks a truly theological heart, mostly by referring to places in his work where he speaks more theologically. It seems to me that Hauerwas misses Healy's point. Healy does not mean that Hauerwas's work lacks passages on doctrines other than ecclesiology. His concern is rather that Hauerwas, because of his conviction that there ought to be no reflection on the logic of belief apart from Christian practice, ends up distorting certain doctrines, as, for example, that of Scripture. In his critical review of Healy's book, Michael Cartwright is right to point out that Healy could have looked to Hauerwas's ethics to distil doctrinal emphases, rather than searching for a systematic theology in someone who has repeatedly said that he is no systematic theologian. In the end, this is what Hauerwas's answer always comes down to: Belief abstracted from Christian practice has no meaning. Hauerwas's response to charges of a deficient doctrine of Scripture would follow along the same lines. He has no doctrine of Scripture. He believes such a thing to be a useless abstraction, since what matters is a community that reads Scripture and lives by it. Although Hauerwas does not address it in his response to Healy, the question of authority should also be solved in the community. Through its worship the community is open to "continual reality checks", Hauerwas writes in response to Gustafson.⁶⁶ The convictions and practices of the community are for Hauerwas by way of principle dynamic in their nature. But this dynamic is internal to the community, open only to God, not to the world.

To sum up, Hauerwas's ecclesial turn is attractive to many, but has also raised serious concerns. Critics have expressed the fear of sectarianism and a deficient doctrine of creation. Others fear Hauerwas's MacIntyrean starting point and a subsequently thin theology of the church. And, finally, is there a church that can bear the weight Hauerwas puts on it?

⁶⁴M. L. Stackhouse. "Liberalism Dispatched vs. Liberalism Engaged". In: *Christian Century* (1995), pp. 962–967, p. 965 and Stackhouse, "In the Company of Hauerwas".

⁶⁵S. Hauerwas. *The Work of Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015, p. 266.

⁶⁶Hauerwas, "A Response to Gustafson", p. 101.

1.2.3 Questions from Hauerwas's Ecclesial Turn

We have spent some time with Hauerwas and his critics to get a better understanding of what is meant by the ecclesial turn and also of the problems it raised. Hauerwas and others have clearly tabled the issue of the nature of the church in a society and culture that finds itself at an increasing distance from the Christian faith. Hauerwas's description of the problem, his definition of the church, the state, and even the core of the gospel, are all under debate, but none of his critics deny the problem he has raised as such, and most even applaud this reflection. The fact that contemporary western theology gives evidence of this ecclesial turn in such a broad spectrum of theologians only serves to bolster the claim of this relevance. The disagreement starts as soon as Hauerwas proceeds to his description of the relationship between the church and the world. Is it to be conceived along the lines of a MacIntyrean community of virtues shaped by the stories of the gospel, as Hauerwas would have it? Or is this a conception that leads the church away from the Christian Scripture and tradition, as Nicholas Healy argues?

Many of Hauerwas's critics share the concern that his conception of a strong church puts its relationship to the world in peril. At bottom, they ask two interrelated questions: Is the church in Hauerwas's conception still legible to the world? And are there grounds for this church to be able to engage with the world? These missionary-apologetic questions both come down to the question whether or not the church and the world share common ground. Such a common ground provides the church with a rationale to engage in the world and with legibility. Theologically this common ground can be construed in many ways. Gustafson demands a doctrine of creation. Stout speaks about common ground, which Roman Catholic theologians generally describe in terms of natural law or natural theology. In Reformed theology, the concept of general revelation or common grace is used to provide a similar basis. Karl Barth famously opposed the entire idea of any sort of common ground with a firm "Nein". However, according to some his nearly universal Christology opened doors he had closed before.⁶⁷ If the reception of Hauerwas's ecclesial turn makes anything clear, it is that his strong emphasis on the differentiation of the church from the world compromises the public character of the church. Or, in other words, Hauerwas's conception of the church continually drives him into the sectarian corner, despite his repeated attempts to deny this claim. The tension between Hauerwas's emphasis on the otherness of the church on the one hand and the concern for the church's public nature on the other touches on the very core of my research project.

⁶⁷O. D. Crisp. "On Barth's denial of universalism". English. In: *Themelios* 29.1 (Oct. 2003), pp. 18–29.

For the present research I would like to formulate this tension with the following question that will guide my research:

How does Klaas Schilder conceive of the church as both distinct from and engaged with the world?

This question is the central topic of the present study and will guide our reading of Klaas Schilder. In what follows, I will unpack the main question further to determine what other questions require treatment in order to provide a full answer to the central question.

First, it is important to consider what exactly is meant by the ‘church’. And how does that definition deal with the tension of Protestant ecclesiology mentioned above? Is the church primarily a community of believers, or the institution? If the latter, what defines that institution? Is it a local or rather a global entity? Or do we mean by the church the invisible church that transcends all different institutions, the ‘people of God’?

A second, related question concerns the church’s relationship to Christ. How is the church the body of Christ? How does the Bible relate to the church? How does revelation fit in? And how does the church relate to salvation and predestination?

Thirdly, just as the term ‘church’ requires a definition, so the slippery term ‘world’ is in even greater need of clarification. In the broadest and neutral sense the world means creation, all that is. In a somewhat narrower sense the world is something that is opposed to the gospel and to the church, tainted by sin and the powers of evil. The world also has the meaning of the new world that is a future as well as a present reality. These three aspects cannot and may not be separated. They are part of one history.⁶⁸ An important matter of discernment here is the issue of commonness between the church and the world. That there is some separation between the church and the world is uncontested, but what about legibility and the common experience that these borders are never all that sharp?

Fourthly, there is the issue of the church’s engagement with the world. Total withdrawal is hard to imagine, and has virtually never been argued by anyone. What is a matter of debate, however, is the rationale for and nature of the engagement. According to Karl Rahner, this can end up anywhere between the two heretical extremes of *Integralismus* (the world should become church)

⁶⁸K. Rahner. *Kirche und Welt*. In: *Herders Theologisches Taschenlexicon*. 4. 1972, pp. 216–233, pp. 217–218.

and *Esoterismus* (the world is irrelevant to the church).⁶⁹ The term ‘engagement’ has consciously been chosen for its broad range of meaning. It can refer to direct engagement, that is, the church speaks directly in political or societal issues, or sets up certain specific ministries in which it engages with the world outside. Indirect engagement is also implied, that is, the church encourages or educates its members to take up a certain role or position in politics, the arts, or society. Mission is also a potential part of this engagement, in either its indirect or direct form. Resonating in the background here is the relationship between church and kingdom.⁷⁰

1.3 Methodology

The above may give the impression that the present study is a work of systematic theology: A theological question from a contemporary debate has been chosen to guide the research, and the encounter between Hauerwas and Schilder was justified by theological rather than historical reasons. The purpose of our investigation is to contribute to contemporary questions using insights from the past. However, rather than a work of systematic theology, this study is better understood as a historical building block that has the potential to serve systematic theology. It does not offer a biblical analysis of the questions posed, nor does it investigate the relationship with the church’s creeds and confessions. It also does not seek to offer a deep and detailed comparison between Schilder and Hauerwas. This is a work of historical theology, informed by my contemporary question.

The main body of this work consists of four chapters that follow the development of Schilder’s thought on the church and the world. While I began with a systematic-theological question, it is Schilder’s voice that is prominent here. My research has taken its starting point in the sources, and had Schilder himself, as it were, decide how the question is to be answered and whether the question even was a good one to ask at all. The historical approach seeks to give room to Schilder’s voice and to prevent my question from imposing itself on what Schilder has to say in his own right. My reflections on how Schilder’s thought may contribute to the contemporary debate, together with several evaluating remarks, will have to wait until the last chapter. In concluding sections, however, I will return to the questions posed here with an occasional allusion to Hauerwas’s ideas.⁷¹

⁶⁹Rahner, *Kirche und Welt*, pp. 221-224 and M. Honecker, *Kirche und Welt*. In: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*. Ed. by G. Müller. Vol. 18. Berlin, Boston: Walter De Gruyter, 1989, pp. 405–421, pp. 407-408.

⁷⁰Honecker, *Kirche und Welt*, p. 407.

⁷¹For two recent examples of a similar approach, see M. J. Tuininga. *Calvin’s Political Theology*

I have chosen to present Schilder's thought in four chapters that follow the development of his thought, rather than structuring the chapters systematically. I did so for a number of reasons. The first is a general concern that the understanding of theology in the past benefits greatly from a historical approach, even if the ultimate concern is systematic-theological in nature. Internal developments, historical context, and biographical elements help to understand a theologian's thought. This is, secondly, especially the case with Schilder. As will often be noted in the following chapters, Schilder's work is far from systematic. Most of his work consists of articles in church weeklies. Even his classroom notes, which are indeed more systematic in nature, still have a considerable contextual element. These writings are often polemical: Schilder's works are with virtually no exceptions responses to the writings of others, always in the heat of the debate. This makes Schilder's work difficult to access and in need of explanation: It is full of allusions and implicit references that have become opaque with the passing of time. The best way to offer the required explanation is to follow the developments of Schilder's thought. This enables the reader to follow his biography and the historical context, and so to arrive at a better understanding. The third reason is the ecclesial schism in which Schilder was involved towards the end of his life. This had such an impact on him and his work (chapter 6) that the writings stemming from after the schism simply cannot be treated in the same way as what he wrote before.

The fourth reason has to do with the nature of the secondary literature on Schilder. While I believe that Schilder's oeuvre in particular demands a historical approach, most preceding scholarship has failed to take this route (see the next section). This failure is all the more reason for a historical approach to Schilder's thought. Fifth, one of the conclusions of this study concerns the great internal consistency of Schilder's oeuvre. The presentation of his thought through four consecutive periods serves to substantiate and illustrate this claim. The consistency of Schilder's work is particularly remarkable given the predominantly ad hoc nature of his writings.

The emphasis of the present study thus lies on the internal development of and tensions within Schilder's work, and on the interaction of the development and tensions with Schilder's biography and with the historical context of both church and society of his time. The discipline I am practising here is that of the history of ideas, and, more specifically, the genre of what I am writing is an

and the Public Engagement of the Church. Cambridge University Press, 2017 and J. H. Wood. *Going Dutch in the Modern Age: Abraham Kuyper's Struggle for a Free Church in the Netherlands*. Oxford University Press, 2013. They both approach the subjects of their study, respectively Calvin and Kuyper, in a historical manner with an explicit contemporary concern for the relationship between the church and the public domain.

intellectual biography.⁷² What I do not offer is a detailed analysis of the genesis of Schilder's thought. I do occasionally show connections to his tradition or to contemporaries, but the substantiation of such claims lies beyond the focus of this work. Karl Barth, for example, is often in picture. Many have argued that Schilder's view of Barth is a reduction of Barth to his earlier work, and that is also my impression. It is, however, beyond the scope of this work to judge Schilder's use of Barth. As to Schilder's forebears, attention is occasionally given to Kuyper, Bavinck, and Calvin in particular as key figures in Schilder's background. This is also what I mean when I refer to the 'Reformed tradition', that is, Calvinism. But again, Schilder's relation to his Reformed ancestors is not in view here.⁷³

1.3.1 Periodization

The four chapters of this dissertation follow the development of Schilder's thought on the relationship between church and world through four periods. For the purpose of an intellectual biography, such artificial dividing lines are a necessity. In this section I will detail why I have chosen to draw these lines in 1926, 1934, and 1944.

The first chapter spans the time until 1926, and the second until 1934. There is a consensus among scholars that a shift in the development of Schilder's thought occurs around 1930. Douma divides Schilder's theological development on common grace into three periods. The period 1930-1932 is characterised as a period of transition from a view in the line of Kuyper towards a more critical distance.⁷⁴ This shift is very tangible in Schilder's work in that his early engagement with literature shows itself to have gotten stuck somewhere

⁷²An example of intellectual biography is Bruce McCormack's work on the early Barth. Like McCormack, I describe the development of ideas through different periods in Schilder's life. In contrast to McCormack, I will be giving less attention to the genesis of Schilder's thought. This difference results from our differing aims: McCormack seeks to counter certain claims in the interpretation of Barth, while I am interested in uncovering Schilder's ideas. Another difference is that McCormack limits his work to the early Barth, while still offering a *Gesamtheit*, while I have the entire Schilder in view, but limit myself to a specific question B. L. McCormack. *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, pp. vii-xii, 20-23. See similarly Kees van der Kooi, who seeks to "clarify the development of Barth's theology from 1909 until 1927" (C. van der Kooi. "De denkweg van de jonge Karl Barth: een analyse van de ontwikkeling van zijn theologie in de jaren 1909-1927 in het licht van de vraag naar de geloofsverantwoording". PhD thesis. Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1985, p. 1). More recently, Bart van Egmond has followed the same method in his book on the early Augustine, which he calls a "chronological-systematic" study (B. van Egmond. *Augustine's Early Thought on the Redemptive Function of Divine Judgement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 20-21).

⁷³For an excellent example of such an endeavor, with special reference to the topic of common grace, see Douma, *Algemene genade* (ET Douma, *Common Grace*).

⁷⁴Douma, *Algemene genade*, pp. 185-203 (ET Douma, *Common Grace*, pp. 210-232).

in the 1930s; few poems, artists, and novels dating after 1920 can be found in his oeuvre. Another biographical element serves to bolster the thesis of a shift around 1930. Schilder spent a considerable span of time in Erlangen in relative solitude: No sermons, few articles, no direct contact, but only patient letters. This period must have given him the ability to take some distance from his church and country. What topics were at stake? Where was he to spend his energy? Furthermore, Schilder's encounter with Barth, which probably started in the mid-1920s, reached its apex with his dissertation in 1933. As we will show, this encounter had great impact on Schilder. All these elements legitimize the fissure in the development of Schilder's thought that has generally been located around 1930. Like Jochem Douma, most secondary literature notes something of a shift around 1930. Peter Veldhuizen concludes in his dissertation on Schilder's conception of history that until 1930 the artist in Schilder prevailed over the scholar. After 1930, it was the scholar that gained in dominance, to Veldhuizen's regret.⁷⁵ Jos Dee intended to write a biography in three volumes, the first extending to 1934, when Schilder assumed his professorate in Kampen.⁷⁶ In a brief biographical sketch, Rudolf Bremmer identified the publication of Schilder's dissertation in 1933 as the beginning of a new period in his life.⁷⁷

The periodization I have chosen to follow here is not meant to indicate disagreement with the perceived shift around 1930. There is a wide consensus that around the thirties a number of shifts can be detected in Schilder's thought. Yet every date is arbitrary, since shifts are often gradual. I choose to draw the lines in 1926 and in 1934. This has a practical reason in that the material for these respective periods is sufficient for separate chapters. Moreover, 1926 was an important year for Schilder and legitimizes a break at this point. As I will argue at length in section 3.1.2, Schilder's parallel encounter with the theology of Karl Barth and his defense of the synod of Assen bears greatly on his thought.⁷⁸ These elements form the reason that from 1925 onwards Schilder's focus begins to shift towards the changes that come to full fruition in the early thirties. The next line, which I have chosen to draw in 1934, coincides with Schilder's final shift to the academy, when he became a professor at the seminary in Kampen. It is true that his academic work began as early as 1930 when he took his first study leave to Erlangen. When we look at his thought on the church, however, the period after 1934, marked by his classroom lectures on the creed in 1935, his thought really begins to develop and becomes more systematic from that

⁷⁵P. Veldhuizen. *God en mens onderweg: hoofdmomenten uit de theologische geschiedbeschouwing van Klaas Schilder*. Leiden: Groen, 1995, p. 339.

⁷⁶J. J. C. Dee. *K. Schilder: zijn leven en werk*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1990, p. 13.

⁷⁷R. H. Bremmer. "Schilder, K." In: *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands protestantisme*. Ed. by D. Nauta. Vol. 1. Kampen: Kok, 1978, pp. 314–318, p. 315.

⁷⁸See the glossary for the synod of Assen.

time on. In a survey of Schilder's thought on the church, a shift in 1934 makes sense. But while dividing lines may be necessary for the sake of highlighting developments and for the presentation of the material, one should once again bear in mind that they remain artificial.

The third dividing line has been set at 1944. This is the year when the ecclesial schism in which Schilder was implicated took place.⁷⁹ Whereas Schilder was one of the many influential voices within the *Gereformeerde Kerken* before 1944, after the schism he became the undisputed leader of the newly formed denomination, the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated)).⁸⁰ As I will argue in chapter 5, nothing impacted Schilder more than this schism. Most of his writings after 1944 are marked by the schism, which was nothing less than a traumatic experience for him. This is most clearly confirmed by the second editions of earlier works he published in that period (see especially section 5.2.5). The impact of the schism was such that I chose to alter the central question of that chapter to the following: What are the consequences of the new situation on Schilder's thought? To avoid needless repetition, I pulled some of the theological works where the impact of the schism was less obvious, such as Schilder's *Heidelbergse Catechismus* and the *Dictaten Kompendium Dogmatiek*, into the previous period. Thus, chapter 4 extends into the period following the schism and to his death insofar as it offers theological reflection at a distance from the ecclesial circumstances. Chapter 5 focuses on the new ecclesial circumstances and how they impacted Schilder's thought on the church and the world.

1.3.2 Status Quaestionis

Now that I have made clear how I intend to answer the main question at the heart of my study, I will situate it within the field of research. Of primary importance for my research is the scholarship surrounding the person and work of Klaas Schilder. While several monographs and collections of articles have been published on Schilder's theology, the question of the relationship between the church and the world has never been the subject of inquiry. His views on the church and on culture have, however, already been treated by others before.

Schilder's views on the church have a long reception history. Already during his lifetime they came under scrutiny.⁸¹ The history of the churches of the 1944 schism of which Schilder became the unofficial leader are intertwined with a lengthy debate on Schilder's ecclesiology in all kinds of church weeklies and leaflets. Especially around the time when a second schism took place in 1967,

⁷⁹For the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*, see the glossary and the chart (A.1).

⁸⁰See the glossary and chart (A.1 for more background on the different Dutch denominations.

⁸¹P. J. Richel. *Het kerkbegrip van Calvin*. s.n., 1942.

Schilder's views were hotly debated. So too in the 1990s when the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* started a process of change and reflection, Schilder's thought came back in view. The difficulty with this part of the reception history is that the principal concern was not to do justice to Schilder's view, but rather to justify claims in the heated polemics of the time.

This holds true also for one of the two monographs on Schilder's ecclesiology. Jos Dee's *Schilder oecumenicus* is an extensive treatment and evaluation of Schilder's ecclesiology. It centers on the brochure *Ons aller moeder* and the related internal ecclesial questions, rather than the church's relationship to society. Particularly in Dee's polemics with Henno Smit, the debate over the future of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* is obviously present in the background.⁸² The second monograph on Schilder's ecclesiology is entitled *Sodat hulle een kan wees: Klaas Schilder oor die kerk*, written by Wikus Buys, a South African minister.⁸³ Buys provides a thorough systematic overview of Schilder's thought on the church, including a section on the relationship between the church and the world, but is less instructive on the historical context and the developments and tensions within Schilder's work. Smaller, yet significant contributions were made by Henno Smit⁸⁴, and in English by Kim Batteau.⁸⁵ Finally, Berkouwer treats Schilder's ecclesiology in his *Studies in Dogmatics* as well as his theological memoirs.⁸⁶

Schilder's views on culture were equally subject to a long and turbulent reception history. His contemporaries Oepke Noordmans, Heiko Miskotte, Arnold van Ruler, and Valentijn Hepp responded furiously to his proposals, without, in my view, making a real effort to understand Schilder's concerns (see section 3.4.1).⁸⁷ Thereafter, the reception of Schilder's view on culture was marked by the development of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*. First,

⁸²J. J. C. Dee. *K. Schilder - oecumenicus: K. Schilder over het 'kerkelijk vraagstuk'*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1995, pp. 176-185.

⁸³A. L. A. Buys. *Sodat hulle een kan wees: Klaas Schilder oor die kerk*. Totiusdal: Koers, 2011, pp. 222-283.

⁸⁴H. J. D. Smit. "Gehoorzamen: achter Christus aan! Schilder over de kerk". In: *K. Schilder: aspecten van zijn werk*. Ed. by J. Douma, C. Trimp, and K. Veling. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1990, pp. 66-89, pp. 66-89.

⁸⁵J. M. Batteau. "Schilder on the Church". In: *Always Obedient: Essays on the Teachings of Dr. Klaas Schilder*. Ed. by J. Geertsema. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995, pp. 65-100, pp. 65-100.

⁸⁶G. C. Berkouwer. *De Kerk I: eenheid en katholiciteit*. Dogmatische studiën. Kampen: Kok, 1970 (*ET* G. C. Berkouwer. *The Church*. Trans. by J. E. Devison. Studies in Dogmatics. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1976) and G. C. Berkouwer. *Zoeken en vinden: herinneringen en ervaringen*. Kampen: Kok, 1989.

⁸⁷G. Puchinger. *Een theologie in discussie: prof. dr. K. Schilder: profeet, dichter, polemist*. Kampen: Kok, 1970, A. A. van Ruler. *Kuyper's idee eener christelijke cultuur*. Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1940 and V. Hepp. *De algemeene genade*. Kampen, 1937.

there was the debate on the ongoing reformation in the 1950s (see section 5.3), and later the discussions over the future of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* in the 1990s. Jochem Douma's excellent monograph on common grace does, however, manage to maintain greater distance from these in-house debates.⁸⁸ Douma not only compares Schilder with Kuyper and Calvin, but also pays attention to developments within Schilder's thought. Smaller contributions include an article on Christ and culture by Douma in a collected volume,⁸⁹ an article by Jurn de Vries in that same collection on Schilder and politics,⁹⁰ and from Sander Griffioen on Schilder's earlier views.⁹¹ In English there is Niek Gootjes's essay on Christ and culture in Schilder, with a careful critical evaluation.⁹² Finally, Henry Van Til's book on Calvinist culture also includes a section on Schilder.⁹³

This overview serves to show how the present research can add to what has been done before. First, although the question of the relationship between church and world was at the very heart of neo-Calvinism, it has never been subjected to extensive inquiry. It is precisely in combining ecclesiology and culture that this book seeks to tread new ground and to shed new light on Schilder's oeuvre. Second, the reception history of these two topics of church and culture was influenced greatly by ecclesial polemics within the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*. This research hopes to lift Schilder's thought from debates in order to offer a more balanced account. Thirdly, by connecting Schilder to contemporary concerns and presenting this study in English, I hope to make Schilder's thought accessible to a larger audience.

1.3.3 Sources

Four levels can be discerned in the material available for a study on Schilder's thought. The first are the published works. Some are monographs and others are collections of earlier published articles in periodicals. These publications deserve priority. The second level is formed by the articles published in periodicals.

⁸⁸Douma, *Algemene genade* (ET Douma, *Common Grace*).

⁸⁹J. Douma, C. Trimp, and K. Veling, eds. *K. Schilder: aspecten van zijn werk*. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1990, pp. 169-201.

⁹⁰J. P. de Vries. "Schilders betekenis voor het politieke en sociale leven". In: *K. Schilder: aspecten van zijn werk*. Ed. by J. Douma, C. Trimp, and K. Veling. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1990, pp. 202-230.

⁹¹S. Griffioen. "De cultuurfilosofie in de openbaring van Johannes en het sociale leven". In: *Geen Duimbreed: facetten van leven en werk van prof. dr. K. Schilder*. Ed. by J. de Bruijn and G. Harinck. Baarn: Ten Have, 1990.

⁹²J. Geertsema, ed. *Always Obedient: Essays on the Teachings of Dr. Klaas Schilder*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995, pp. 35-64.

⁹³H. R. van Til. *The Calvinist Concept of Culture*. Philadelphia: P&R, 1972, pp. 137-154.

Since Schilder selected some for second publication and discarded others, this is indicative of a differentiation. Both these levels were intentionally published by Schilder.

This does not apply, however, for the third level, the *dictaten*. In the Dutch university of Schilder's time, lectures given by professors formed an important part of the curriculum. It was not uncommon for students to publish the notes they took, often in collaboration with the professor. These published notes were called *dictaten*. Schilder's students, like Kuyper's, published an impressive number of such *dictaten*, providing access to an entire area of Schilder's professional activity that would otherwise have remained beyond reach. In their use, however, the issue of reliability needs to be addressed. This is necessary since every published copy of the *dictaten* explicitly warns that "prof. Schilder is not responsible for the content".⁹⁴ The need for caution is reinforced by Schilder himself addressing the matter when treating someone else's unpublished work: "This has never been published, and that should be taken into account; what has not been prepared for publication by the author himself can never be charged to his account."⁹⁵ However, there are several reasons why the *dictaten* can still be considered a valuable and reliable source. First, Schilder was aware of the *dictaten* and did not prevent their publication. At times he even checked the notes and corrected them. Second, Schilder used many of the *dictaten* as compulsory reading for later classes.⁹⁶ Thirdly, as we will see, the *dictaten* reveal a clear consistency both internally and with Schilder's published works.⁹⁷ For these reasons the *dictaten* can and will be used as an important and reliable source. It is, however, necessary to keep in mind that they remain secondary and were not intentionally published by Schilder.

The fourth level is formed by works of Schilder published by others. There are three series of collected works. The first was published during Schilder's lifetime by Kees Veenhof, *Om Woord en Kerk*. These are four volumes of works by the early Schilder selected by Veenhof and published between 1947 and 1953. Schilder himself only grudgingly allowed their publication: "If it were up to

⁹⁴"Buiten de verantwoordelijkheid van prof. Schilder"

⁹⁵"Het is nog nimmer gepubliceerd, en men rekene daarmee; want wat niet door den auteur zelf voor de pers is gereed gemaakt, mag nimmer op zijn rekening gesteld worden." (K. Schilder. *Heidelbergse catechismus: zondag 8-9*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1950, p. 138).

⁹⁶See K. Schilder. *Kompendium ethiek. Deel VI*. 1st ed. Kampen: Brever, 1951, p. 31, where Schilder refers in the classroom to one of the *dictaten*.

⁹⁷See E. A. de Boer. "Professor Schilders atelier: zijn colleges, dictaten en studenten". In: *Almanak Fides Quadrat Intellectum*. FQI, 1990, pp. 148–176 for an overview of all the available *dictaten* and an extensive argument for their reliability. A similar argument is made by W. van der Schee in the unpublished introduction to the part of the Collected Works that includes the *dictaten*. See also G. Harinck. *De Reformatie: weekblad tot ontwikkeling van het gereformeerde leven 1920-1940*. Passage 8. Baarn: Ten Have, 1993, p. 303n69.

me, such work of youth should not be republished without being corrected, expanded, and polished.”⁹⁸ The second series was published by Kees Veenhof, Wietze de Vries, and Jaap Kamphuis in the years following Schilder’s death. They published all the sermons they managed to retrieve (*VWPreken I-III*), all the meditations (*VWSchriftI-III*), and a selection of works assembled around the theme of the church (*VWKerk I-III*). This last volume is important for the present study, but must be treated carefully since it represents a thematic selection of materials; a survey of the periodicals in which Schilder published remains necessary for a complete overview. The third series intended to cover all that Schilder wrote in chronological volumes. Four volumes were published: *VW17-19* by Wim van der Schee, *VW40-41* by George Harinck, *VW42-44* by Wietze de Vries, and *VW44-45* by Harinck and de Vries.

There is a second issue in the source materials that needs our attention here: the later editions of volumes that Schilder himself published. As he himself noted above, republication always meant for him that the text was “corrected, expanded, and polished”. That is indeed what he did. Often the changes were so substantial that the later editions need to be treated as completely different books. The changes Schilder made provide great insight into developments in his thought.

⁹⁸“als ’t aan mij lag, zou al dat jeugdwerk niet weer mogen verschijnen, zonder te zijn gecorrigeerd, aangevuld, gepolijst.” (“Boekbespreking” in: *De Reformatie* 27-5, p. 47 (November 3, 1951)).

Beginnings: 1890-1926

In this chapter I will trace the genesis of Schilder's developing thought on the nature of the church and its engagement with the world. As I will demonstrate, Schilder's thought shows great consistency throughout this process of development. This means that the influence and historical background of these theological strands must be traced back in significant measure to this period. Some theologians experience major developments later on in life that at times completely overturn their earlier ideas. This is not the case for Schilder, as his first years as a student and young pastor formed a defining stage in his intellectual life. Indeed, "whoever wishes to understand Schilder [...], will have to start with the early Schilder."¹ Or, as Berkouwer writes, "the 1920s had a considerable, decisive role in the development of Schilder's thought."²

This is not to say, however, that there is no development or a change of emphasis at all. In the first decade of his theological activity, the church is not a topic of particular concern for Schilder. Conversely, eschatology, art, and mysticism show themselves to be prominent topics that will recede into the background in later periods. I will seek to demonstrate how these shifts in attention are not reflective of a theological shift, but are actually united at a deeper level. Schilder's engagement with the arts and mysticism, for example, reflect the same theological emphasis as his later focus on the church. There is not an early artistic Schilder and a later scholastic Schilder. Notwithstanding this underlying theological consistency, developments are still not entirely absent, as I will also be demonstrating.

¹J. Kamphuis. "Concentratie op wat hoofdzaak is": In memoriam prof. dr. K. Schilder, overleden 23 maart 1952". In: *Verkenningen II: Opstellen over de Kerk en haar geschiedenis*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1965, pp. 169–189, p. 171.

²Berkouwer, *Zoeken en vinden*, p. 298.

The central aim of this chapter is thus twofold. First, it seeks to demonstrate the consistency of Schilder's thinking. In this study, I propose to compare the development of Schilder's thought with a house under construction. This first period is then the rough sketch of what the house is going to look like. Schilder's writings are scattered and unsystematic, and with regard to our central question in particular (i.e., the church-world relationship) his thought is as yet undeveloped. The purpose is therefore to look at this period in light of Schilder's more mature views as detailed in chapters 3 and 4. Is there continuity or discontinuity, and how can that be explained? This also explains the title of the present chapter: *Beginnings*. While we will often be looking forward here, that is not reflective of my methodology. I in fact studied the material for this chapter before moving on to the the material of the later periods. As such, I sought to keep myself from reading later developments into this first period.

Second, if Schilder's thought is indeed consistent, the formative impact of this period must be considerable. Accordingly, we will be examining Schilder's upbringing and education to better understand this initial formative period, which is then the second aim of this chapter. As I will argue, the crisis brought about by the First World War also proved to be a major influence.

This chapter has three sections. The first deals with Schilder's cultural and theological background, and his formative years until he started his professional life in 1914. This section falls under the second aim of this chapter, but also represents a wider background necessary to understand the subsequent description of his thought. It asks where Schilder was, and when, and how these circumstances shaped him. The second and third sections form a diptych focussing on our first aim: what does Schilder write that is relevant for our understanding of the relationship of the church and the world? And how do later core emphases appear (or not appear) in this period?

2.1 Schilder's Background

There are three aspects of Klaas Schilder's milieu as a youth and a student that are defining for his theological development: his social background, his Reformed education in Kampen, and his character. Each of these three elements will be treated in a separate section. A fourth section will deal with the First World War, which coincided with the start of Schilder's ministry and would become a defining influence.

2.1.1 Social Background

In 1890, the year Schilder was born, Kampen was a peripheral city in the kingdom of the Netherlands. Its medieval town center still reflected something of

its short and glorious past as the economic capital of the Low Countries in the fifteenth century. Those days were, however, long gone. After hundreds of years with minimal change, industrialization had brought modest economic growth over the course of the nineteenth century. Kampen had attracted a number of cigar factories that were in significant measure responsible for employment in the town. Schilder's father also worked for a cigar manufacturer. His wages were among the lowest in Kampen society, and the dust-producing work he did at home affected the health of the entire family. Infant death and tuberculosis were common among cigar manufacturers, and also Schilder sr. had lost his first wife and daughter. It is not unlikely that these circumstances were at least a partial cause for his own untimely death in 1896, when he was only 41 years old, leaving behind his wife and four children. After elementary school, Klaas was forced to find work in order to contribute to the family income, and further study was a financial impossibility. Yet after a year of work, one of the faculty members at the Reformed Gymnasium saw Schilder's talent and arranged for a scholarship so that he could be enrolled at the secondary school in 1903.³

How was this working class background important for Schilder, and was this a distinguishing feature? Ridderbos has argued that Schilder's humble beginnings were indeed an important aspect of his early life.⁴ He notes how Schilder deals with the social question in the first years of his ministry, and rightly explains Schilder's concerns and nuanced view from this perspective. It is indeed hard to imagine that such an upbringing, together with the upward social move Schilder went on to make in life, would play no role.⁵ Dee, who finds Ridderbos's characterization exaggerated, does note that Schilder's childhood poverty "influenced him greatly".⁶ When one recalls also how Schilder's first love, as we will see below, was forbidden by her parents to see him because of Schilder's lower class social status, it becomes hard to deny these dynamics. His humble beginnings also set Schilder apart from his fellow leaders of the Reformed churches. With some exceptions, most of the leaders in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* had upper or middle class backgrounds.⁷ Schilder therefore grew

³J. Ridderbos. "Van Molenstraat naar Oudestraat. Klaas Schilder tussen 1890 en 1933". In: *Jaarboek voor de geschiedenis van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* 3 (1989), pp. 95–135, pp. 95–101 and Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, pp. 40–45.

⁴Ridderbos, "Van Molenstraat naar Oudestraat", p. 126.

⁵See also Schilder's letter to his wife when he was in prison in 1942: "As a young kid I remember waiting in the lobby with fear and trembling, cap in my hand, to ask Mrs Boele if she could please express her gratitude to Sinterklaas for all the gifts. [...] Every year Sinterklaas brought a basket full of gifts and I was sent to thank them for it. It was freezing when I went. Mother had also been in that kitchen often when Kampen's elite dined inside. The factory owners were the flower of the city." Schilder in Ridderbos, "Van Molenstraat naar Oudestraat", p. 95.

⁶Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, pp. 36–37, 287.

⁷Valentijn Hepp and Cornelis van Gelderen shared their background with Schilder, but

up as a working class boy who became part of the Reformed elite not by virtue of any advantage of social class, but by virtue of his own intellectual prowess. In the fierce polemics on the church that Schilder was to become engaged in during the 1930s, his theological adversaries came from different social milieus. In these polemics, his humble background would at times play a role.

Schilder's youth and background, however, have more explanatory force. Schilder's emancipation exemplifies the social mobility that was a novelty in the twentieth century. It illustrates how the start of the twentieth century was experienced as a new era, an age with endless possibilities, where nothing was taken for granted. The world was open for everyone to cultivate, to explore, and to expand. The optimism of the nineteenth century would be changed by the Great War, but the idea of progress stayed in place (see section 2.1.4). The twentieth century was also the age of the individual; thus endless possibilities were open with which every individual could engage. Class and family history became less important, while individual talent and quality became increasingly relevant.⁸ Schilder exemplifies this change, giving himself and his work a contemporary hue that was appealing to many, while arousing suspicion for others. Upon the German invasion of 1940, Schilder himself was to recall New Year's Eve 1900: "I still see myself, barely nine years old, standing on the balcony of the Kampen *Burgwalkerk* after the New Year's Eve sermon, delivered by Rev. G. Elzenga at the turn of the century. The sermon had addressed many things about this new century. The nineteenth century had already given us numerous inventions; what would the 20th yield?"⁹ This dynamic sheds light on the polemics between Schilder and the Reformed elite. It plays a role, for example, when Herman Kuiper speaks about Schilder's followers as "beardless youngsters", and Jan Ridderbos describes them as those "who have no time to read Bavinck and Kuiper because they have to establish a new periodical".¹⁰ When Noordmans responded

most other influential leaders of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* during the Interwar period, like Jan Ridderbos, Herman Kuiper, Gerhard Aalders, Jan Geelkerken, and Henk van der Vaart Smit, came from middle- and upper-class families. For the *Gereformeerde Kerken* see glossary.

⁸M. de Keizer and S. Tates. *Moderniteit: modernisme en massacultuur in Nederland 1914-1940*. Jaarboek van het Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie 15. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2004, pp. 9-25 See also what the young Dutch poet Hendrik Marsman (1899-1940) wrote in 1919: "That new and broad optimism has taken hold of us, we live vitality, dynamism, tension". ("het nieuwe, het wijde optimisme heeft ons besprongen, wij beleven de vitaliteit, de dynamiek, de spanning" in: J. Bel. *Bloed en Rozen: geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1900-1945*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2015, p. 506).

⁹"Ik zie mezelf nog als amper 9-jarig jongetje op de gaanderij van de Kamper Burgwalkerk staan na de Oudejaarsavondpreek, die ds G. Elzenga had gehouden bij den overgang van 1899—1900. Een nieuwe eeuw: de preek had er veel van gezegd. Wat al een uitvindingen in de 19e, en wat zou de 20e baren?" ("Weerhouding" in: *De Reformatie* 20-42, p. 325 (26 juli 1940)).

¹⁰Quoted in G. Harinck. "Op losse schroeven: gereformeerden en de moderniteit". In: *Moderniteit: modernisme en massacultuur in Nederland 1914-1940*. Ed. by M. de Keizer and S.

to an article written by Schilder in 1932 and calls it “modernism on clogs”, the same sentiment plays a role. It is not that Schilder did not read Kuypers or Bavinck or even Calvin, for he did. What Schilder’s opponents rightly felt, however, was that Schilder lacked a sense of tradition. Notwithstanding his deep loyalty to his tradition, he related to it in an independent manner. Confessions were not historical documents for Schilder, they were the actual, contemporary act of confession of the church. If they needed to be updated, they had to be updated. This is also why Schilder could call the church fathers “church children”.¹¹ It furthermore is where Schilder’s trilogy *Christ in his Suffering* fits in: Schilder was treading new ground, developing a new kind of Reformed spirituality (see section 2.2.3 below).

Schilder’s emphases that resonated with his cultural context as exemplified by his own biography rooted themselves even deeper in his theology, however. The way human responsibility becomes a central theme in Schilder’s theology should be understood as an expression of these emphases. The covenant will become for Schilder the place where God takes his covenant partner seriously as partner, such that both his wrath and blessing can become one’s part in the covenant (section 4.2.3). At this point Schilder’s thought has often been mistaken as a form of Arminianism. The centrality of the individual and the possibilities at his disposition to shape life and the world are also at the heart of Schilder’s reflection on the cultural mandate. If anything, Schilder’s later shift from common grace to common mandate is again reflective of this emphasis: it centers on the responsible individual. The same notion is visible also in Schilder’s ecclesiology. The church is for him a fundamental dynamic reality: it has an open end, it is always becoming. For a member of that church, that once again implies individual responsibility both to choose the true church and always to shape it in a faithful manner.

2.1.2 Reformed Education

Although Schilder was born and baptized in the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, his mother switched her allegiance so as to join the *Gereformeerde Kerken* following her husband’s death. These were the two churches in which Schilder grew up. From 1903 to 1914 Schilder was educated at the Kampen Gymnasium and Seminary, which were associated with the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. These were two separate institutions, but still shared the same building and some of their teaching staff. The Gymnasium offered an education of classical hue with a strong emphasis on history, as well as modern and classical languages. Yet also the maths, where Schilder was weak, were on the curriculum. Other than that,

Tates. Walburg Pers, 2004, pp. 332–354, pp. 344–345.

¹¹K. Schilder. *Christus en cultuur*. Franeker: Wever, 1948, p. 119.

Schilder proved an excellent student, and after completing his studies at the Gymnasium he was able to move on to the Kampen Seminary in 1909.¹²

To understand the Kampen Seminary and Schilder's education there, we need to form an idea of the churches in which Schilder grew up and received his education. Two years after his birth, in 1892, the *Gereformeerde Kerken* came into existence after a merger between virtually the entire *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* and the *Nederduitsch Gereformeerde Kerken*. The former had their origins in the 1834 secession known as the *Afscheiding*, a separation from the historic Protestant church in the Netherlands, the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*. The latter issued from the 1886 secession called the *Doleantie*, another exodus from the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, this time led by Abraham Kuyper.¹³

The *Gereformeerde Kerken* formed a self-confident denomination at the beginning of the twentieth century, despite a modest representation of roughly eight percent of the Dutch population. The merger in 1892 was an impressive achievement, since only a few churches refused to follow and rather continued the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*, thus reclaiming the old *Afscheiding* epithet.¹⁴ At this time the Free University in Amsterdam was growing with the towering figure of Abraham Kuyper at its head, and in Kampen Bavinck had finished his Reformed Dogmatics. The two finest Dutch Reformed theologians of the turn of the century were thus in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. In 1901 Kuyper became prime minister of the Netherlands. The churches prospered. What Kuyper had always emphasized seemed to be becoming reality: The *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* was a sinking ship, as its inner division, connection to the state, and tolerance of liberal theology were taking their toll. Kuyper had often prophesied that the future lay only in sound Calvinist orthodoxy, free from the bonds of the state. The *Gereformeerde Kerken* were the only place where such could be found. Its aspirations were not just to be a true church, but also to restore the nation to its former glory. For Kuyper, the separation of church and state did not mean that he had no ideals for the nation. The Netherlands could only be restored to its former glory in a return to Calvinist principles, as had been the case in the Dutch Golden Age when both Reformed orthodoxy and the nation had flourished in unprecedented fashion. Kuyper's tools were the united churches, his newspapers, his university, and his political party. In Schilder's perspective on the church and the world, this Kuyperian ideal is always present in the background. Schilder's views on the church and its relationship to the world are, as I will demonstrate, variations on the Kuyperian theme.

¹²Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, pp. 41-45 and Ridderbos, "Van Molenstraat naar Oudestraat", pp. 100-101.

¹³See the glossary and the chart (Appendix A.1) for better insight in the different schisms and denominations.

¹⁴See again chart (A.1) and glossary.

Kuyper's project did not go uncontested. The 1834 *Afscheiding* tradition itself was a pluralism of secessions with diverging emphases that had gradually fused into a federation of churches in 1869. Some of its representatives were sympathetic to Kuyper's broad ideals, while others mistrusted his activism and rationalism. After the *Vereniging* in 1892, in some places churches of such different backgrounds may officially have been united into a single federation, but in practice continued their separate existence as two parallel churches often referred to as 'A' (*Afscheiding*) and 'B' (*Doleantie*) churches. The incongruity between the two strands was also reflected in the tensions opposing the Kampen Seminary and the *Vrije Universiteit* in Amsterdam.¹⁵ After the merger of the churches in 1892, Bavinck, who served as professor at the Kampen Seminary, attempted several times to merge Kampen and the *Vrije Universiteit*. In 1902 he even used the ultimate 'kill or cure'-remedy and left the Kampen Seminary for the Free University, together with one colleague and most of the students. The seminary was left on the verge of closure but survived. When Schilder entered the seminary, it was still recovering and counted only thirty students. Some antagonism would remain between 'Kampen' and 'Amsterdam', a tension that Schilder had to navigate throughout his life and would play a role at several key moments. Schilder would come to mistrust the *Vrije Universiteit* increasingly, also because Kampen, in contrast to the *Vrije Universiteit*, was repeatedly refused by synod the right to grant doctoral degrees.¹⁶

In the above, I in passing referred to Bavinck and Kuyper as the two most prominent Dutch Reformed theologians at the turn of the century. What was the theological climate in the Netherlands like at that time? The neo-Calvinist revival of Kuyper and Bavinck had dominated the theological scene ever since the 1890s. The backdrop to that revival were the 'modern' theologians who had been dominant from the 1850s to the 1880s, also at the Dutch academies. Bavinck and Kuyper themselves were educated at Leiden University under the famous modern theologians Scholten and Kuenen.¹⁷ Neo-Calvinism is a reaction to modernist theology and as such strongly influenced by this movement. Kuyper and Bavinck explicitly framed their program as a contemporary and orthodox alternative to liberal modernism. They aimed to be orthodox in the sense that Scripture was removed from the scrutiny of historical criticism and reinstated as God's infallible Word and the norm for all of life. It was orthodox also in its criticism of positivism and the restoration of the supernatural. It

¹⁵The *Vrije Universiteit* (Free University) was founded by Kuyper in 1880 as a confessional Reformed University.

¹⁶G. Harinck and W. Berkelaar. *Domineesfabriek*. Prometheus/Bert Bakker, 2018, pp. 159-162.

¹⁷With 'modern' I refer to the 'moderne richting' in the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, a theological movement characterized by theological liberalism and historical criticism.

was not, however, simply a repristination of Calvin, despite Kuyper's claims to the contrary. In the separation of church and state, its view on science, understanding of civil society, and progressive attitude, as well as in its many concepts like common grace, pluriformity, and the organic motif, neo-Calvinism had a distinctly modern hue.¹⁸ Even the neo-Calvinists' defence of the Bible was done in the same rationalist manner, and with the same historical awareness, that Scholten and Kuenen had applied in their critical approach to Scripture.

Both the secession movements of the 1830s and the later Kuyperian exodus were related to the early nineteenth century *Réveil*, a more pietistically colored as well as elitist revival that was connected to similar movements throughout Europe. The *Réveil* also influenced another theological current that became important in the second half of the nineteenth century, namely the so-called *ethische* movement that sought to navigate a way between modernism and orthodoxy.¹⁹ Like neo-Calvinism, the *ethische* movement sought to reform the church, albeit not along institutional lines. Its proponents also criticized the modernist movement in the church, although they were not as emphatic on the point of historical criticism. The *ethische* theology had its roots in the nineteenth-century *Vermittlungstheologie* and in Schleiermacher. It was 'ethical' in the sense that morality was considered more vital than doctrine, and that religion was held to concern the heart and consciousness (Schleiermacher) more than doctrine and principles did. "Niet de leer, maar de Heer", (Not doctrine, but the Lord) was the slogan applied to the *ethische* movement. A third group, which also had roots in the *Réveil* and was even closer to Kuyper's thought, was represented by the 'Confessionals'. Founded by Kuyper's spiritual father Groen van Prinsterer, the Confessionals shared the neo-Calvinists' emphasis on the institutional reform of the church, but diverged on the matter of church and state. The Confessionals denounced Kuyper's secession and emphasized the unicity of the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* and the ideal of a Christian nation with a national church. At the turn of the century, the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* was composed of those three theological currents: the modernists, the *ethischen*, and the confessionals. The *ethische* and confessional currents in the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* were theologically close to neo-Calvinism. The topics that still separated neo-Calvinists and the *ethischen* was the doctrine of Scripture, as shown in the debate between Kuyper and Gunning in 1880s. With the confessionals the hot topic was the church as expressed in Kuyper's polemic

¹⁸For Kuyper's modernity, see Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper*, pp. xiv-xvii. For Bavinck, see C. Brock. "Orthodox yet Modern: Herman Bavinck's: Appropriation of Schleiermacher". PhD thesis. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2017, who traces the deep influence of Schleiermacher on Herman Bavinck.

¹⁹I have chosen to retain the Dutch term *ethische* for referring to this movement, preferring it over the literal English translation 'ethical' so as to avoid confusion.

with Philip Hoedemaker (1839-1910) around the same time: is the church a *volkskerk*²⁰ or not?²¹

For the development of Schilder's thought this background proved essential. Schilder acted as Kuiper's heir in his polemics with the theologians of the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* where the same topics would remain key: the interpretation of Scripture and the church. In the course of Schilder's working life, however, the neo-Calvinists saw their old enemies return, now in the cloak of Karl Barth. For in the course of the 1930s, the *ethischen* began to embrace Barth's thought. That is also how Schilder approached Barth: as *ethische* theology wrapped in a new garment. Against Barth, Schilder would continue to defend the historicity of Scripture, as Kuiper had done against the *ethische* Gunning. Only in this way can one understand Schilder's one-sided approach to Barth, and his subsequent emphasis on revelation. This emphasis is intimately connected with Schilder's ecclesiology, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter. For him the church is both the guardian of revelation and the only place where its effects become as concrete as God's revelation is clear.

Schilder's education in Kampen plunged him deeply into the Reformed world of Kuiper and Bavinck. The seminary itself had its roots in the 1834 *Afscheiding*. Founded in 1854 as the school for training ministers of these seceded *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken*, it was the school where Herman Bavinck himself had served as professor of dogmatics until 1902. Bavinck's successor Anthonie Honig (1864-1940) taught in the same line, but through his education at the *Vrije Universiteit* in Amsterdam was also strongly influenced by Abraham Kuiper. Honig's teaching followed the classical loci of Reformed dogmatics as also reflected in his *Dogmatic Handbook*, published in 1938.²² His work was an attempt at synthesis between Bavinck and Kuiper. Honig also taught philosophy. Languages and exegesis formed another strong emphasis of the Kampen Seminary's curriculum. Education in classical languages was continued from the gymnasium curriculum: Latin with Cicero and Horace,

²⁰Volkskerk (church of the people) denotes a view on the church heralded by Hoedemaker that the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* had to be the church of all the people of the nation and not a free church of committed members.

²¹For the history of the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, see A. J. Rasker. *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795: geschiedenis, theologische ontwikkelingen en de verhouding tot haar zusterkerken in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*. Kampen: Kok, 1986; for the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, see H. C. Endedijk. *De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. Deel 1 1892-1936*. Kampen: Kok, 1992 and Harinck, "Op losse schroeven: gereformeerden en de moderniteit". For the Free University, see M. J. Aalders. *125 jaar Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid aan de Vrije Universiteit*. Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2005, pp. 1-123 and A. T. van Deursen. *Een boeksteen in het verzuild bestel: de Vrije Universiteit 1880-2005*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2005; for Bavinck, R. H. Bremmer. *Herman Bavinck en zijn tijdgenoten*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1966 and for Kuiper, see Bratt, *Abraham Kuiper*.

²²A. G. Honig. *Handboek gereformeerde dogmatiek*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1938, passim.

and Greek with Sophocles and Plato. Ecclesiastical Latin accompanied church history, while instruction in biblical Greek and Hebrew served exegesis. Of particular influence on Schilder was Lucas Lindeboom, professor of New Testament and Greek. Lindeboom was not so much a brilliant academic or exegete as an inspirational character and polemicist. He was an ardent evangelist, famous also for his social and medical work in founding several mental hospitals. Lindeboom united the piety and love for the Secession tradition without a hint of the partisanship or narrow-mindedness that could sometimes be found in those circles. He was critical of Kuyper on many issues and engaged him publicly, yet without ever doubting the necessity of the 1892 merger. He initiated a chair for medical science at the Free University and emphasized the necessity of good scientific research to undergird the medical institutions he founded.²³ It is this combination that Schilder valued in Lindeboom: “Church loyalty and cultural force: Lindeboom” were the words with which Schilder closed his ‘In Memoriam’ to him in 1933.²⁴ This quote serves to illustrate how Schilder was a student of Lindeboom. A strong church and engagement with the world: That was how Schilder envisaged the church, and these very things he had learned from Lindeboom.²⁵ Schilder’s emphasis on the confessions, a theme less present in Kuyper, can also be traced back to Lindeboom.²⁶ So too Schilder’s independent position with respect to Kuyper is something we recognize in Lindeboom: There was respect and a sense of deep unity, yet without abandoning critique.²⁷

In secondary literature on Schilder’s background, there is disagreement as to whether Schilder was marked more by the *Afscheiding* tradition or by the *Doleantie*. Rolf Bremmer characterizes Schilder as a predominant adherent of the tradition of the *Afscheiding*, mainly through the influence of Lindeboom as well as Noordt zij Sr. and Jr., who were also among Schilder’s teachers.²⁸ Schilder’s biographer Jos Dee disagrees, and insists that the *Afscheiding* sympathies of Schilder only come to the fore from 1934 and onwards. In Schilder’s pursuit of

²³For the history of the Kampen Seminary, see Harinck and Berkelaar, *Domineesfabriek*, pp. 98-146. For Schilder’s professors, see Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, pp. 47-53; and for Lindeboom in particular, see H. Mulder. *Lindeboom, L.*. In: *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands protestantisme*. Vol. 3. 6 vols. Kampen: Kok, 1988, pp. 250–253, pp. 250-253.

²⁴“In Memoriam Professor Lindeboom” in: *De Reformatie* 13-15, p. 114f (January 13, 1933).

²⁵L. Lindeboom and A. W. Bronsveld. *De Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk: een en ander over haar toestand, roeping en toekomst, aan de ernstige overweging ook van de geloovigen buiten haar aanbevolen*. Heusden: Gezelle Meerburg-Wuijster, 1875, pp. 16-17.

²⁶See, e.g., L. Lindeboom. *Heb den waarheid en den vrede lief: open brief aan Dr. A. Kuyper*. Leiden: Donner, 1880, pp. 47-50 and Lindeboom and Bronsveld, *De Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*, p. 3.

²⁷For Lindeboom’s influence on Schilder, see also W. van der Schee. “Aantreden in de rij”. Loenen, 2004.

²⁸Bremmer, “Schilder, K.”, p. 314.

unity between 'A' and 'B' churches, Dee sees proof of the absence of a specific sympathy.²⁹ Wim van der Schee follows Bremmer in arguing that 'Kampen' is more important as a key to understanding Schilder than 'Amsterdam'. The dominating ecclesiocentric-legitimistic current³⁰ of the *Afscheiding* represented in the person of Lucas Lindeboom indeed left strong marks on Schilder. Its accent on the covenant, on a strict binding to the confession, and on a strict pure-church ecclesiology can be traced throughout Schilder's work.³¹ For now we should simply note that Schilder received his education in an *Afscheiding* environment. It cannot be denied that he identifies with Secession theologians and themes more than with the *Doleantie*. And his growing critique of Kuiper, his polemics with the Free University professors, and his subsequent professorate at the Kampen Seminary kept pushing him towards a Secession position. Schilder's teachers, however, were not necessarily exponents of the Secession tradition. Honig was an explicit blend of the two traditions, and about Lindeboom Schilder himself once wrote: "I still hear him say in his lectures: The *Doleantie* needed us, but we also needed it; the *Doleantie* saved us."³² The pronoun 'us' reveals that Lindeboom saw himself as an *Afscheiding* man, or at least that was Schilder's perception. Yet, as I will relate in section 4.1.2, Schilder was also a student of Kuiper in many ways, and that is what he wanted to be. Here we should also observe that Schilder in terms of his family had no particular roots in either tradition.³³ Schilder's only roots were in the Kampen Gymnasium and Seminary. At that time they were a product of both the *Doleantie* and the *Afscheiding* traditions.

Schilder's education, like that of most students, extended beyond the curriculum of the Seminary. Gerard Wisse (1873-1957), the minister of the local *Gereformeerde* church who at the time enjoyed a certain degree of renown, organized philosophy classes in Kampen where modern religious and philosophical trends were discussed. The "*nieuwe religie*" was a particular item on Wisse's agenda. With the "*nieuwe religie*" Wisse referred to theosophy, new mysticism, and Buddhism which held great appeal at that time. Wisse's method was to describe the new spiritual currents, while at the same time preaching about their

²⁹Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, p. 90.

³⁰D. T. Kuiper. *De voormannen: een sociaal-wetenschappelijke studie over ideologie, konflikt en kerngroepvorming binnen de Gereformeerde wereld in Nederland tussen 1820 en 1930*. Meppel: Boom, 1972, p. 207.

³¹Schee, "Aantreden in de rij".

³²"[...] hemzelf op college nog zeggen: de doleantie heeft ons noodig gehad, maar wij ook haar; de doleantie heeft ons gered." "In Memoriam Professor Lindeboom" in: *De Reformatie* 13-15, p. 114f (January 13, 1933).

³³See Schilder's genealogy in Ridderbos, "Van Molenstraat naar Oudestraat", pp. 127-131. Not only the Schilders had been *Hervormd*, but also the family of Schilder's mother were *Hervormd* until she became *Gereformeerd* in 1896 upon her husband's death.

dangers. In his method he was more a preacher than an academic.³⁴ Schilder was an active participant in these classes, and appears to have engaged in a personal “heart-to-heart conversation” with Wisse.³⁵ Schilder’s treatment of modern philosophies and spiritual currents is reminiscent of Wisse’s method. Also like the later Schilder, Wisse was a critical follower of Abraham Kuyper. He furthermore emphasized the necessity of ecclesial unity between the A and B churches. It was only later on in life that Wisse became more critical of Kuyper and the lack of pietistic accents in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. In 1920 he switched to the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*, a move that met with fierce criticism from his former student Schilder.

Schilder was educated in the united *Gereformeerde Kerken*. He was a product of his Kampen education with all the narrowness and breadth which that implied. There was narrowness in the sense that Kampen was not a full-fledged university, but had a somewhat isolated, antithetical position. As such, Schilder’s education differed from that of both his forbears Kuyper and Bavinck, as well as his great adversary Karl Barth, who were all trained in mainstream academies and hailed from more educated milieus. His education was nonetheless broad in the sense that the education itself was of considerable quality, and extended to include philosophy, literature, and classical training. Schilder, without tradition as he was, had no particular loyalty to either ‘A’ or ‘B’ tradition, but was a product of their merger. Having said that, the association of Kampen with the *Afscheiding* shaped Schilder more than the *Doleantie* did. His ecclesiology is to be understood as expressive of the neo-Calvinist tradition of the merged *Gereformeerde Kerken*. His theology was born and cradled, and would remain, within the confines of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.

2.1.3 A Lonely Prophet

Alongside Schilder’s social background and Reformed education, a third important element for an understanding of his thought is his complex personality and loneliness. Secondary literature, perhaps in somewhat romantic fashion, depicts Schilder as undergoing a profound and existential struggle in his student years.³⁶ Indeed, Schilder’s writings as a student do appear to give evidence of depression, loneliness, and intense heartache. However, the writings of his fellow students show that the dramatic themes of heartache and death were a ‘normal’ topic for

³⁴G. Wisse. *Nieuwe religie: (en hare wijsbegeerte)*. Arnhem: Arnh. Drukkerij en Uitgeverij, 1911.

³⁵“Brief Wisse aan Schilder” (Archief Schilder, Archief en Documentatie Centrum Kampen).

³⁶J. D. Boerkoel. “Een kritische geest”. In: *De Bazuin* 103.32 (1960), C. Veenhof. *Gedenkt uw voorgangers: in memoriam Prof. Dr. K. Schilder, 19 Dec. 1890-23 Maart 1952*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1952, pp. 10-11, Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, pp. 59-67.

such stories. The struggle to reconcile suffering with God's providence and care is a particularly persistent theme. Yet there is no doubt that a certain Goethian romantic dramatism pervades the stories and poems. Youth and young love are idealized, and even death, though terrible, is depicted as a purifying experience that brings one closer to God. The stories witness a playful experimentation with the romantic short story, inspired by Goethe. This is confirmed by the fact that Schilder's own experience of an impossible love with Lientje Wiersinga, allegedly blocked by her parents, occurred early in 1913, while most of his poems lamenting a broken heart date from before that time.

And yet, there is a difference separating Schilder's writing from that period from those of his fellow students. Apart from the literary quality and poetic use of many languages (German, Latin, Greek), his work breathes an air of greater loneliness and depression than the others do. Where most other stories end on some kind of happy note, whether earthly joy or devout surrender, Schilder's stories and poems not infrequently end in despair or death.³⁷ The account of Schilder walking on the *Zwarte Dijk* outside of Kampen with his best friend at the time, Jan de Waard, in the midst of his aforementioned love-crisis, exclaiming "I wish I could let the blood flow from my wrists", fits the (anti-)heroes of his own poems and stories.³⁸ Another striking feature is one of the few "*varia*" (i.e., quotes applied to students or professors as a means of mild and humoristic scorn) in the *Almanakken* that clearly refers to Schilder. Here the title of Ibsen's play, *En folkefiende* (An enemy of the people), is applied to Schilder. Boerkoel rightly remarks that Schilder himself did not oppose the publication of this characterization.³⁹ This image of Schilder as an enemy of the people is also reflected in what is maybe the most tragic and powerful short story, *De Profeet*.⁴⁰ There Schilder depicts a man in a village who has the gift of foresight. The people in the village start to eschew and ignore him, calling him 'the prophet'. At one point, the prophet foresees a fire at his brother's farm. Schilder writes: "But internally the unrest boiled in his heart. [...] And at night he saw again that terrible fire and he experienced anew that anxious fright. [...] And it appeared to him that *he* was the arsonist, *he* the culprit, *he* the murderer. [...] Oh how terrible it is to be a prophet!"⁴¹ The story ends

³⁷The stories and poems of Schilder and his fellow students were originally published in the *Almanak Fides Quaerit Intellectum*, 1910-1914. Schilder's stories were collected and published in K. Schilder. *Eenzaamheid en gemeenschap: proza en poëzie van K. Schilder uit zijn studentenjaren*. Ed. by J. Dee. Haarlem: Vijlbrief, 1990.

³⁸"Brief Aya Schilder aan George Puchinger" (1984) kopie in ADC Kampen, verzameling J.J.C. Dee.

³⁹J. D. Boerkoel. "De eenzame zoekt gemeenschap". In: *De Bazuin* 103.36 (1960).

⁴⁰Schilder, *Eenzaamheid en gemeenschap*, pp. 89-100.

⁴¹"Maar inwendig kookte de onrust in zijn hart. [...] En des nachts zag hij weer dien vreeselijken brand en diens angstigen schrik doorleefde hij opnieuw. [...] En het kwam hem voor

with the brother's death in the fire. The prophet himself dies on that same day while ringing the bell announcing his brother's death. One can only speculate on the degree to which this story may have been autobiographical. But the account of Schilder's contemporaries and a general impression of his work of youth provide a consistent image of a struggling young man. This sense comes to raw expression in one of his earlier poems: "The rough philistines // they laugh loudly // But I weep, all alone, // over my sorrow."⁴²

The image arising from Schilder's works of youth as a lonely prophet has considerable explanatory force. Dee suggests that Schilder found consolation for this loneliness in the community of the church and in his faith in God.⁴³ This helps us to understand why the church becomes such an essential part of Schilder's theology, and also why his suspension by and ousting from the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in 1944 hit him so deeply and became a traumatic experience for him (see section 5.1). It also helps us to see how Schilder's emphasis on the objective church was for him never cut off from his personal relationship with God, from his 'mysticism'. Communion with God and with the church had a deep existential layer in Schilder's personality. It is difficult not to recall the story about the lonely prophet when we follow Schilder through his life. We will continue to see a lonely *folkefiende*, a gifted prophet, who feels alone in his vision of future evil, an artist who plays the organ at night, alone in an empty, dark church, torn between God's calling to serve and a life of happiness and artistic expression.⁴⁴ "God commands! We can do nothing else! Our own heart is pushing us! We want to do nothing else! Or, likewise: peaceful power...till death!", Schilder writes in the 1914 *Almanak*.⁴⁵

The elements in this section point, furthermore, to Schilder's affinity with the Danish philosopher Kierkegaard and the related Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. Ibsen and Kierkegaard are often mentioned together as kindred spirits, despite the many differences between them.⁴⁶ While Schilder was a student,

dat *hij* de brandstichter was, *hij* de schuldige, *hij* de moordenaar. [...] O, het was schrikkelijk een profeet te zijn!" (Schilder, *Eenzaamheid en gemeenschap*, p. 100).

⁴²"De ruwe philisters // Die lachen zo luid; – // Maar ik schrei, gansch eenzaam, // Mijn weedom uit." (Schilder, *Eenzaamheid en gemeenschap*, p. 52).

⁴³Dee in Schilder, *Eenzaamheid en gemeenschap*, p. 142. See also J. Schaeffer. "Schilder mysticus". In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, pp. 205–260, pp. 209–212 and the title of one of Boerkoel's articles on Schilder: "Loner seeks community" (Boerkoel, "De eenzame zoekt gemeenschap").

⁴⁴See Schilder, *Eenzaamheid en gemeenschap*, pp. 77–85 and the accounts of Schilder himself playing the organ at night in Veenhof, *Gedenkt uw voorgangeren*, pp. 10, 44, 64.

⁴⁵"God beveelt! Wij mogen niet anders! Ons eigen hart dringt ons! Wij willen niet anders! Of, wat hetzelfde is: Rustige kracht...tot in den dood!" (Schilder, *Eenzaamheid en gemeenschap*, p. 117).

⁴⁶See, recently, T. C. Theoharis. "After the First Death, There Is No Other.' Ibsen's Brand

Kierkegaard became increasingly popular, also among theologians.⁴⁷ His works were translated into Dutch for the first time and widely discussed. Kierkegaard was also popular among the students in Kampen, and Schilder is reported to have read both Kierkegaard and Ibsen extensively during his time as a student.⁴⁸ As we saw with the “*varia*”-quote cited above, Ibsen was also well known among the Kampen students, and people identified Schilder with Ibsen’s Brand. Later on, reviewers were to call the early Schilder a “Reformed Kierkegaard”.⁴⁹ Ibsen’s portrait hung in Schilder’s study as a pastor. Melanie Spans has shown that the Dutch anthology of Kierkegaard’s works, S. Kierkegaard. *Nieuwe keur uit de werken*. Ed. by R. Chantepie de la Saussaye and I. van Dijk. Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn, 1911, had significant influence on Schilder’s K. Schilder. *Licht in den rook*. 2nd ed. Delft: Meinema, 1926, both in content and in style, thus confirming De Moor’s intuition. One of the shared themes is their common critique on a church that is isolated from the life of the world.⁵⁰ Both Kierkegaard and Ibsen accompany Schilder throughout his life in the many quotes one finds scattered throughout his works. Critique and appreciation always went hand in hand. Nevertheless, once Schilder saw the connection between Barth and Kierkegaard, it was critique that gained the upper hand.⁵¹

The depth of Schilder’s identification with Kierkegaard comes to best expression in Schilder’s painful love-story as we related it above. After Lientje’s parents had ended the relationship, Schilder, burdened by heartache, proposed to a much older woman, reportedly on a whim. The following days, Schilder is said to have regretted his proposal, but he stuck to his promise. He married her and they stayed together for the rest of his life in what, according to some, was an unhappy marriage. This biographical element would again confirm Schilder’s

and Kierkegaard’s Fear and Trembling”. In: *Ibsen Studies* 1.1 (2000), pp. 9–29, pp. 10–11 and W. Banks. “Kierkegaard and Ibsen Revisited: The Dialectics of Despair in Brand”. In: *Ibsen Studies* 4.2 (2004), pp. 176–190.

⁴⁷G. Harinck. “Is Kierkegaard daar? Over de ontvangst van de Deen onder Nederlandse protestanten”. In: *Liter. Christelijk Literair Tijdschrift* 12.54 (2009), pp. 31–40.

⁴⁸Veenhof, maybe somewhat romantically, writes about this time that Schilder “experienced Kierkegaard with great emotion. The latter’s relationship to, and suffering over, Regine Olsen touched him existentially and stayed with him.” “[...] onderging in hevige bewogenheid Kierkegaard. Diens verhouding tot en lijden om Regine Olsen hebben hem existentieel gegrepen en blijvend bezig gehouden” Veenhof, *Gedenkt uw voorgangeren*, p. 10.

⁴⁹J.C. de Moor in: *De Heraut* no. 2432 (Augustus 31, 1924)

⁵⁰M. Spans. “Schijnt daar Kierkegaard’s licht? Een onderzoek naar de invloed van Nieuwe keur van Søren Kierkegaard in *Licht in den rook* van Klaas Schilder”. Bachelor’s thesis. Theologische Universiteit Kampen, 2018, pp. 19–23.

⁵¹See, e.g., Schilder’s articles against Barth in K. Schilder. *Bij dichters en schrifgeleerden: verzamelde opstellen*. Amsterdam: Holland, 1927 and also his dissertation K. Schilder. *Zur Begriffsgeschichte des Paradoxon: mit besonderer Berücksichtigung Calvins und des nach-Kierkegaardschen Paradoxon*. Kampen: Kok, 1933 with special attention for the “nach-kierkegaardschen Paradoxon”

loneliness. As Veenhof indicates, the relationship between Kierkegaard and Olsen keeps appearing in Schilder's work, and Schilder shows himself critical about the breaking of the engagement.⁵² It is difficult not to think of Schilder's own experiences when he urges his young readers in 1918: "Therefore, the promise should not be made before you know what you are doing and before you are convinced that you are entitled before God to engagement."⁵³

What, then, is it that drew Schilder to Kierkegaard, and how did this impact his thought on the church? Dee rightly notes that for Schilder, keeping a promise once made is an essential virtue that lies at the heart of the Christian life. Dee also refers to Schilder's engagement in this respect.⁵⁴ The Sermon on the Mount with its "Let your yes be yes and your no be no" (Matthew 5:37) is often quoted by Schilder. In the ecclesial schism this would resurface: Disloyalty was the greatest of sins for Schilder, and the moral conflict was the main point of conflict for Schilder in potential cooperation with the very churches that suspended him. In his article on Ibsen's *Brand* and Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, Theoharis notes that "it is to sacrifice that both Kierkegaard and Ibsen call their contemporaries. To sacrifice and to its qualifying internal stance, faith. The problems of sacrifice and faith in the bourgeois world which occupied Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling*, occupied Ibsen throughout his career, and emerge all at once, and for the first time in that career in *Brand*."⁵⁵ It is striking that the similarities between Ibsen and Kierkegaard are to a great extent also what we recognize in Schilder. Although the term 'sacrifice' does not feature prominently in Schilder, a radical decision of faith demanding 'all or nothing' is indeed characteristic of his theology. It should furthermore be noted that Schilder prepared the publication of a collection of meditations with the title 'All or nothing'. In the posthumously published introduction, Schilder refers explicitly to Ibsen "whose play 'Brand', as you know well, depicted the theme of 'all or nothing' with a poignant gravity".⁵⁶ Schilder then concludes: "All or nothing", – such is the content of the Word and thus the content of

⁵²K. Schilder. "Over het „skandalon”". In: *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 32.2-3 (1931), pp. 49–67, 97–130, p. 61, K. Schilder. *Heidelbergsche catechismus*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1939/1940, p. 44 and K. Schilder. *Heidelbergsche catechismus: zondag 10*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1951, p. 273.

⁵³"Daarom legge men die belofte niet af, vóór men weet, wat men doet en voor men overtuigd is, dat men voor God gerechtigd is tot het aangaan eener verloving."

⁵⁴Schilder, *Eenzaamheid en gemeenschap*, p. 145.

⁵⁵Theoharis, "After the First Death, There Is No Other.' Ibsen's *Brand* and Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*", p. 11.

⁵⁶"Wiens drama 'Brand', naar men weet, het thema 'alles of niets' ons met indringenden ernst voor den geest heeft willen plaatsen." K. Schilder. *Schriftoverdenkingen*. Ed. by C. Veenhof. Vol. 2. Verzamelde werken II. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1957, p. 91.

Scripture.”⁵⁷ As Veldhuizen has demonstrated convincingly, this idea of ‘all or nothing’ pervades Schilder’s thought.⁵⁸ The entire Christian life is characterized by the adage “For or against Christ”, so Schilder writes in 1936.⁵⁹ In this meditation this antithetical attitude is in Kierkegaardian fashion addressed to a bourgeois Christianity devoid of sacrifice. “Let all fainthearted Christians be put to shame”, Schilder exclaims.⁶⁰ When the covenant becomes an important category in Schilder’s work in the course of the 1930s, it is no surprise that the ‘all of nothing’-motif is applied to the covenant. The South-African theologian Sybrand Strauss was therefore right to entitle his dissertation on Schilder’s view of the covenant *Alles of Niks*.⁶¹

As we will see, church and covenant are for Schilder intimately connected. Schilder’s ‘all or nothing’-theology has a profound impact on the church as the heart of the Christian life. That is the place where the ‘all or nothing’ of the gospel is felt most strongly. The influence of Kierkegaard and Ibsen reveals how much the church was an existential matter for Schilder and should, according to him, be an existential matter for everyone. The extent of this influence is exposed in the schism that Schilder was a part of in the 1940s: Here his inability to relativize or to wait in matters of the church is exemplary for how the church was the sphere of ‘all or nothing’. Or, as Van Langevelde calls it, the church was “the climate of the absolute”.⁶²

2.1.4 War, Crisis, and Renewal

In the three preceding sections I have sought to sketch the context and background of Schilder’s youth and education as far as they are relevant for this study. In this final section we will take a step forward in time from his youth to the first years of his ministry. We will see how the Great War that coincided with Schilder’s early ministry shaped his context immensely, not only in terms of his wider cultural context, but also within the narrower confines of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.

1914 was an important year for Schilder: That year he finished his studies at the Kampen Seminary, was called to be the minister in the *Gereformeerde Kerk* of Ambt-Vollenhove, and married Anna Walter. That same year also saw a war

⁵⁷“Alles of niets’, – dat is de inhoud van het Woord, en dus van de Schrift;” Schilder, *VWSchrift II*, pp. 91-92.

⁵⁸Veldhuizen, *God en mens onderweg*, pp. 42-46.

⁵⁹Schilder, *VWSchrift II*, p. 126.

⁶⁰“Laten alle slappe christenmensen zich nu schamen hier.” Schilder, *VWSchrift II*, p. 126.

⁶¹S. A. Strauss. *Alles of niks: K. Schilder oor die verbond*. Bloemfontein: DUO-drukkers, 1986.

⁶²A. P. van Langevelde. *In het klimaat van het absolute: C. Veenhof(1902-1983) Leven en werk*. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2015, p. 605.

break out the likes of which Europe had never seen before. It was a war that would bring an end to the world of the nineteenth century with its optimism, progress, and characteristic Christianity. Although many of the developments that were to become characteristic of the Interwar period were already looming under the surface in the decades before the war, the traumatic experience of the war itself accelerated their rise to prominence. The war made it very clear that the nineteenth-century optimism and technological progress had not in the first place brought about utopia, but rather a war devastating beyond imagination.

The 'roaring' twenties that followed were marked by a chaotic and apocalyptic restlessness on the one hand and an exuberance on the other: "And now ecstasy, the fortissimo, the hyperbole, loudness and emotional explosion became valves for the dominant feeling. And they were most convincing."⁶³ The widespread apocalyptic expectations had different objects, but they were experienced more and more outside of the traditional churches. The general feeling was one of fragmentation and absurdity. Many lived in expectation of a red dawn from the East where Lenin was stirring the Russian people. Others found refuge in various sectarian movements, whether they sprang from the Christian tradition (adventist, pentecostal, etc), from eastern mysticism, or a combination of both (Rudolf Steiner). Above all, youth was venerated, since it more than anything else marked the departure from the age that now belonged to the past. Youth depicted the new total man of the future, inspired by Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. Youth movements flourished all over Europe. But this was no new optimism. Cultural pessimism represented in such best-selling works as Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918) and Ortega y Gasset's *La rebelión de las masas* (1929) told the story of the end of civilization, and looked upon the rising mass culture and technological development with great suspicion.⁶⁴ That suspicion and disdain for mass culture was also part of the development of modern art in Europe. It developed itself in contrast with both the rising popular art and the realistic art of the nineteenth century. The nihilistic and surreal dadaism, where veracity functioned as the leading principle over against the supposed hypocrisy of the establishment, is exemplary for modern art in the twenties, and these are emphases we also recognize in Schilder's position.⁶⁵

This crisis also had a powerful impact on Christianity which, in the previous age, had allied itself ever more closely with the surging nation-states. The Catholic Church had taken a decisive anti-modernist stand in its papal docu-

⁶³H. W. von der Dunk. *De verdwijnende hemel: over de cultuur van Europa in de twintigste eeuw*. Monografieën over Europese cultuur dl. 7. Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 2000, pp. I, 263.

⁶⁴O. Spengler. *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umrisse einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*. Wilhelm Braumüller, 1918 and J. Ortega y Gasset. *La rebelion de las masas*. Revista de Occidente, 1929.

⁶⁵Dunk, *De verdwijnende hemel*, pp. I,251-303, 318-37, 374-86.



Figure 2.1: Boardman Robinson, 'The Deserter' in: *The Masses: A Monthly Magazine Devoted to the Interests of the Working People* Vol. 8 No. 10 (New York: The Masses Publishing Co., July 1916), p. 18-19.

ments and by virtue of its supranational character was less intertwined with the nation-states. It even gained fresh appeal among the elite in the years after the war, since it was positively associated with mysticism, unity, and the venerated Middle Ages.⁶⁶ But cultural Protestantism in England and especially in Germany, deeply imbued with the spirit of the nineteenth century, had come to an intellectual dead end. Victory was promised in the name of God on both sides of the trenches. How God himself related to the blood-stained history of these four years became a poignant theological question. The cartoon by Boardman Robinson vividly captures the reigning sentiment: Jesus is executed by the soldiers of the fighting nations (figure 2.1). A very appealing answer to this vexed question came from the side of Karl Barth's *Römerbrief*, a radical critique of German cultural Protestantism. God and history are not connected, was his answer, God is the *ganz Andere*.⁶⁷ Barth's neo-orthodoxy was a return to the sources of Reformed theology and an elevation of the transcendence of God over against nineteenth-century immanentism. Barth's dialectical method formed a parallel to the Kierkegaard revival of the twenties. Even while this new theology appealed to many Protestants, the atheism of the philosophers still found its way into the intellectual circles of Europe, and through communism and other popular expressions it found its way to the masses.

⁶⁶For this broad phenomenon, see J. Pearce. *Literary Converts: Spiritual Inspiration in an Age of Unbelief*. London: HarperCollins, 1999. In the Dutch context, the poet Hendrik Marsman represents a good example.

⁶⁷K. Barth. *Der Römerbrief*. 14th ed. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1989, p. 4.

The Dutch were on the lee side in these stormy developments affecting their European neighbors. During the war the Netherlands kept its neutrality, and hence the impact of the war was considerably smaller. Catholics and Abraham Kuyper's orthodox Protestants were a dominant force in the political arena. Nonetheless, since the Netherlands was a small country, the elite in particular were susceptible to the intellectual and cultural tides of surrounding countries. The ideas of the renowned historian Johan Huizinga represented the Dutch counterpart to Spengler's pessimistic cultural philosophy. *De Stijl*, with artists like Gerrit Rietveld and Piet Mondriaan, represented modern art in the Low Countries with abstract geometrical forms. Eduard du Perron and Menno ter Braak expressed the mood so characteristic of the 1920s: "Averse to embellishment, pretensions, and flattery one looks for either a renewed expression of community or a skepticism radical enough to minimize the chance of another miscalculation."⁶⁸ These two positions are exemplified in the polemic between Anton van Duinkerken and Menno ter Braak: A fiery clash between Ter Braak's nearly postmodern nihilistic skepticism and Van Duinkerken's Roman Catholic fundamentalism. The parallel between Schilder and Ter Braak and Du Perron has been made by others. They shared a common critique on epigonism and inauthenticity, as well as a love for polemics.⁶⁹

The position that the *Gereformeerden* took towards the stormy developments in the aftermath of the war was twofold. On the one hand their churches had an inward focus which tended to withdrawal from society, a position marked by 'antithesis', a theological concept that pervaded the rhetoric of the *Gereformeerden*. This notion expresses a clear perceived and experienced distinction between the world on the one hand and the church on the other. The *Gereformeerden* had newspapers, weeklies, a political party (the Antirevolutionary party), schools, a university, youth groups, and mass gatherings which may not have been formally aligned with their churches, but were still really their own.⁷⁰ In places like Kampen, where Schilder grew up, the turbulence must in some sense have felt like something distant. Even though this is the image as it is often sketched by historians, it does not tell the whole story, certainly not for Schilder.⁷¹ As noted above, Kuyper's anti-revolutionary party dominated the political scene in the Netherlands during the first half of the twentieth century. The *Gereformeerden* participated in society in an active manner. Also, the interaction with modern

⁶⁸F. Ruiter and W. H. M. Smulders. *Literatuur en moderniteit in Nederland 1840-1990*. Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1996, p. 202.

⁶⁹Bel, *Bloed en Rozen*, pp. 651-660.

⁷⁰For the Antirevolutionary party see the glossary.

⁷¹Harinck, "Op losse schroeven: gereformeerden en de moderniteit", p. 337 and G. Harinck. "Geelkerken en de moderne cultuur". In: *De kwestie Geelkerken. Een terugblik na 75 jaar*. Ed. by G. Harinck. AD Chartas-reeks. Vuurbaak, 2001, pp. 75-80.

culture was high on the agenda of the church's intellectuals. Furthermore, the trends that characterized European society after the war can also easily be discerned in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. The sermons of *Gereformeerde* pastors reveal a sharp turn from cultural optimism to pessimism and apocalyptic expectation around 1914.⁷² This cultural pessimism and eschatology is also characteristic of Schilder in his early writings. The *beweging der jongeren* (youth movement) in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* that strove for renewal and defied the hypocrisy in the churches clearly resonates with the broader youth movement throughout Europe. This is also where Schilder's lack of a sense of tradition fits in the broader cultural context. The journal *De Reformatie* that was associated with the *beweging der jongeren* voiced the doubt and unrest, combined with a sense of need for renewal in its opening statement in September 1920:

Both by gradual transitions and by catastrophic events we have arrived at what is in many ways a different world. [...] It is a world in which on the one hand the leaders and the peoples part with religion and the old ways, and on the other hand a tsunami of 'new religion' and modern superstition floods the desolate souls. [...] A changing world demands a renewed confession, an inspection of our weapons – and an openness to new fertilization."⁷³

The statement closed with an enumeration of theological challenges that closely reflect what were and would remain burning issues within the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. The list reads:

- a. The doctrine of inspiration and the authority of Scripture (amongst others the relationship between the human and divine element in Scripture).
- b. The epistemological issue of faith and the ground of faith.
- c. The limits of Christian freedom with regard to contemporary culture.
- d. The pluriformity of the church and the aspiration to value the variegated shapes of Christianity and to cooperate.

⁷²E. Koops. "Een conflict van strijdige levenswijzen: De gereformeerde prediking en de moderne cultuur (1911-1918)". In: *Moderniteit: modernisme en massacultuur in Nederland 1914-1940*. Ed. by M. de Keizer and S. Tates. Walburg Pers, 2004, pp. 66–83, p. 79.

⁷³"Door geleidelijke overgangen en catastrofale gebeurtenissen zijn wij gekomen in een veelszins andere wereld.[...] Het is een wereld, waarin ter eener zijde de leiders en de volken radicaler dan ooit met godsdienst en oude zeden breken, en waar anderzijds een vloedgolf van 'nieuwe religie' en modern bijgeloof de ontredderde zielen overstroomt. [...] Een veranderde wereld verplicht tot een vernieuwd belijden, tot een herkeur van onze wapenen — en tot een toelaten van nieuwe bevruchting." (B. Wielenga, "Openingswoord" in: *De Reformatie* 1-1, p. 1 (September 24, 1920)). For *De Reformatie*, see the glossary.

- e. Feminism in relation with the life of the church.
- f. The church and the social question.
- g. The church and pedagogy, especially the mature youth.
- h. Reformation of worship, ecclesial life, preaching, liturgy, and catechetical instruction.
- i. The church and evangelization (also among students).
- j. Reorganization of the church in the big cities.⁷⁴

The first two on the list had been key neo-Calvinist themes from the inception of this movement, as I explained above. These were the topics where Kuiper and Bavinck departed from their modernist teachers, and where the polemics with the *ethische* theologians were fiercest. The unrest of the war had only made these questions all the more relevant.

This is the context of the first years of Schilder's ministry. He would become part of the pursuit for renewal in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, fuelled by the unrest of the war. Schilder's publications, especially those from the first period, are a good reflection of this program, with the exception perhaps of the issues of feminism, pedagogy, and the big cities. In this chapter we are following Schilder the young pastor from 1914 to 1925. During this time he served as many as five different congregations. Schilder started in the small rural village in Ambt-Vollenhove, not far from Kampen. Here the *Afscheiding* (A) and *Doleantie* (B) churches were still two separate churches, which explains the specification Ambt-Vollenhove (A). After only two and a half years, in December 1916, Schilder received a call from the united church in Vlaardingingen, a fisherman's town in South Holland not far from Rotterdam. In September 1919 he accepted a call to Gorinchem, a town in the more rural parts of that same province with a congregation of about a thousand members. He moved back to the West in September 1922, to a large congregation of four thousand members in the historical city of Delft, to which he became the third pastor. In October 1925 he was called to the village of Oegstgeest, near Leiden, a call he looked forward to in the hope of finding more time for study.⁷⁵

⁷⁴a. Het dogma der inspiratie en van het Schriftgezag (o.a. de verhouding van den menschelijken en goddelijken factor in de Schrift). b. De ken-kritische kwestie van het geloof en van den grond des geloofs, c. De grenzen van de christelijke vrijheid ten opzichte van de hedendaagsche 'cultuur'. d. De pluriformiteit der Kerk en het streven naar waardeering van en samenwerking met verschillende schakeeringen van het christendom. e. De vrouwenbeweging in verband met het kerkelijk leven. f. De kerk en het sociale vraagstuk. g. De kerk en de opvoeding, speciaal van de rijpere jeugd. h. Hervorming van den eeredienst en het kerkelijk leven, de prediking, de liturgie, het catechetisch onderwijs. i. De kerk en de evangelisatie (ook in de studentenwereld). j. Reorganisatie van de kerk in de groote steden" (B. Wielenga, "Openingswoord" in: *De Reformatie* 1-1, p. 1 (September 24, 1920)).

⁷⁵Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, pp. 69, 80-81, 102, 117-121, 138-141.

2.2 Depth: *Præsentia Salutis*, Mysticism, and the Church

I have now sketched Schilder's milieu and the impact of the Great War that coincided with the start of his pastoral ministry in 1914. We can now turn to the description of Schilder's thought in this period. As I indicated above, what follows is a diptych of two panels: breadth and depth. This pair comes from Schilder himself. In an article on the mysticism of the early Schilder, Jaap Schaeffer points to an article Schilder wrote about the Roman Catholic poet-politician Herman Schaepman (1844-1903) and the Flemish priest-poet Guido Gezelle (1830-1899), both prominent figures in Low Countries at the turn of the century.⁷⁶ Like his contemporaries Hendrik Marsman and Cornelia de Vogel (1905-1986), Schilder felt attracted by Roman Catholicism. In this article, published in 1923, he unapologetically praises the Roman Catholic Church for the way it gathered in her lap both the breadth of Schaepman and the depth of Gezelle.⁷⁷ Schaepman was a politician of impressive stature who had cooperated with Kuyper to form a government. Gezelle was a famous Flemish poet and admired by Schilder (Gezelle's portrait adorned Schilder's study). Jaap Schaeffer sees an autobiographical element in this article: In these two men Schilder identified two strands that he sought to embody himself, namely breadth and depth. I believe Schaeffer is spot on here, since Schilder's work indeed reflects this twofold spirit: breadth and depth. Breadth is representative of engagement with the world, a continuation of the Kuyperian program to bring the church "in sync with the times". And depth speaks of an inward renewal and reflection: spirituality, and the doctrine of revelation and Scripture. For Schilder, this also applied to the church: "The congregation growing in the depths; the light; but at the same time losing in breadth; the smoke!"⁷⁸ These two words reflects the tension that lies at the heart of our research: the character of the church, the depth, and its engagement with the world, the breadth. In what follows I will describe how these two elements are reflected in the contours of Schilder's early theology.

2.2.1 Apocalypse Now: *Præsentia Salutis*

If one were pressed to describe Schilder's thought with a single unifying concept, it would be the notion of the *præsentia salutis*, the presence of salvation. In subsequent chapters this element will return, and the claim will be substantiated.

⁷⁶Schaeffer, "Schilder mysticus", pp. 212-214.

⁷⁷K. Schilder. *Om woord en kerk: deel IV*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1953, pp. 169-172.

⁷⁸K. Schilder. *Licht in den rook*. 1st ed. Delft: Meinema, 1923, pp. 266-267.

The roots for this central element, however, are found in this first period and connected to the experience of the First World War.⁷⁹

In this first period Schilder's emphasis on God's concrete involvement with history is intertwined with eschatology. As I noted above, an apocalyptic climate was widespread throughout Europe, also among the Dutch Reformed. Schilder was no exception. It was as if the war provided precisely the right context for the tense, existential, Kierkegaardian Christianity of his student years.⁸⁰ As will also become apparent in the context of the Second World War, Schilder's theology fits the war context like a glove. Eschatology is omnipresent in Schilder's writings from this period. If anything prevails in his work from these years, it is certainly this. In Vlaardingen, Schilder lectured on the Antichrist and on hell.⁸¹ For his views on the pressing social matters of his time, Schilder used the Book of Revelation as guide.⁸² His sermons, more than those of his contemporaries, thematize the wrath and judgment of God that becomes concretely visible in history.⁸³ His meditations reflect a similar tone.⁸⁴ Schilder's theological response to the war is a deepening of the traditional understanding of God's presence in history. Schilder deepens this by making this presence as concrete as possible. This concretization sets him on an eschatological trajectory during the war. In what follows, I will first describe how we find this reflected in Schilder's work, before turning to the connection between this theme and that of the church and

⁷⁹Others have suggested a similar core concern. Koert van Bakkum suggests that the concept of the *praesentia salutis* is "the core of Schilder's theology" (K. van Bakkum. "De gereformeerde theologie van Klaas Schilder". In: *Radix* 23 [1997], pp. 11–54, p. 157). Using other words, Okke Jager makes a similar characterization, namely that for Schilder the concreteness of faith is what really matters, that is, how God relates to this earth, as concretely as possible (O. Jager. "Concretiseren tot het uiterste". In: *Ontmoetingen met Schilder: prof. dr. K. Schilder, 1890 - 19 december - 1990*. Ed. by G. Puchinger. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1990, pp. 63–75, pp. 63–75). Van Ruler affirms this: "for him, it is all about the *praesentia salutis*" (Ruler, *Kuyper's idee eener christelijke cultuur*, p. 10). Jaap Kamphuis takes the authority of Scripture as the heart of Schilder's theology, but quickly connects it to "the issue of *history* and the *entrance* of God's salvation in Christ within history." (Kamphuis, "Concentratie op wat hoofdzaak is", p. 171). For Schilder on the *praesentia salutis*, see Schilder, *HC IV*, p. 33.

⁸⁰Unless otherwise noted, when I use the word 'existential', I am not referring to the philosophical current, but rather use it in the sense of 'pertaining to the entire existence'.

⁸¹K. Schilder. *Verzamelde werken 1917-1919*. Ed. by W. van der Schee. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2004, pp. 463-466 The lecture on hell formed the basis of the brochure K. Schilder. *Wat is de hel?* 1st ed. Vlaardingen: Dorsman & Odé, 1919. See also K. Schilder. "De ondergang van den antichrist". In: *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 21.1 (1920).

⁸²Schilder, *VW17-19*, p. 443 This lecture formed the basis of the later book K. Schilder. *De openbaring van Johannes en het sociale leven*. 1st ed. Delft: Meinema, 1924.

⁸³See, e.g., K. Schilder. *Preken*. Ed. by W. G. de Vries. Vol. 1. Verzamelde werken I. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1954, pp. 179-192, 360-377 with *Menigerlei genade: wekelijksche leerredenen*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1920.

⁸⁴K. Schilder. *Schriftoverdenkingen*. Ed. by C. Veenhof. Vol. 1. Verzamelde werken II. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1956, pp. 4-9.

its relation to culture.

A beautiful example of the emphasis on eschatological history is found in a meditation first published in september 1920, “Rustig toezien”.⁸⁵ Here Schilder puts the silence of God on the agenda with a meditation on Isaiah 18:4. He writes: “Is He really there? Is He here? Is God, our God, here, Isaiah? Behold, there are clashes amongst the nations of the world; there is fermenting and grinding; there is war and rumours of war.” And then, explicitly, Schilder makes the link with his own time: “Also here there is painful toil, the threat of death, war, murder, smoldering hate, and boasting sin. And on top of that a silent God!”.⁸⁶ In what follows, Schilder does not deny that God can be silent. Rather, he compares the silence of God with a quiet, hot summer day where the fruits ripen under the silent sun. God works in silence, it is an intentional silence. The atmosphere is an eschatological one. The image of the harvest clearly refers to the Last Judgment. Schilder also speaks of the “threat of the silent God”. The message is clear: If we read Scripture well, we discover that the big questions of our age can be answered in the light of an eschatological reading of our time with the aid of Scripture.

In November 1918, shortly after the war had come to a close, Schilder writes in a somewhat ironic manner in the *Gereformeerde Kerkbode van Vlaardingen* (Reformed Church Weekly Vlaardingen) that we have now seen the depths of God and of Satan in the horrors of the war, but that we will now return quickly to everyday life. This is the life where the future, the ‘Maranatha’, will again become an empty expression. It is a future that will never come. Schilder’s appeal is clear: the war has shown us the future! The future is now. God’s final judgment is visible in history.⁸⁷ Schilder wants to show that, far from calling the sovereign God of the Reformed confessions into question, the war and its horrors serve to confirm his kingship. In order to see that, we need to focus on God’s judgment and on what he tells us in his Word about the end of times. Only then does it become apparent how the war fits into the at times ‘terrible’ scheme of God’s rule. Eschatology is thus something that belongs not only in the *jenseits* of time and history, but also in the present time. It is here and now that God’s judgment becomes visible. God’s judgment is also an expression of his *præsentia salutis*. Schilder’s answer to the crisis of his time is a radically theocentric, eschatological theology. He attempts to show that it is not the new religion, not modern philosophy, not modern theology, but classic Reformed

⁸⁵Also published in Schilder, *Licht in den rook*¹, 57ff.

⁸⁶“Ja, is Hij er wel? Is Hij hier wel? Is God, onze God, hier wel, Jesaja? Zie, in de volkerenwereld botst het; het gist er en het schuurt; ’t is oorlog en oorlogsgerucht. [...] Ook bij ons de moeizame arbeid, de dreigende dood, oorlog, moord, gloeiende haat en pralende zonde. En daarbij een zwijgende God!” (Schilder, *Openbaring van Johannes*¹, pp. 60-61).

⁸⁷Schilder, *VW17-19*, pp. 253ff.

theology that provides the way ahead out of the chaos of the continent. The war does not lead away from God, but should deepen our understanding of both God's calling and the time in which we live.

This emphasis is found not only in meditations, but also in Schilder's most important monograph of this period, *De Openbaring van Johannes en het sociale leven* (The Book of Revelation and Social Life).⁸⁸ In this book, Schilder offers a discussion of the social issues of his time in the light of the Book of Revelation. The social issue was a pressing matter and concerned the emancipation of the working class, the rise of labor unions, and the problem of poverty. Schilder criticizes the belief in the possibility of an earthly utopia as he perceives it among socialists and communists. The grounds for his critique are eschatological. For history, Schilder claims, does not develop in a gradual evolution that humans can control. People cannot found a communist utopia. No, history is controlled by God. And that is precisely what the Book of Revelation shows: God is in control of history. "Not evolution, but revelation"⁸⁹. When we read the Book of Revelation, we read of war and hunger. What we see before our eyes, the World War, is what we can expect if we take God's revelation seriously, Schilder wants to say. And we cannot always grasp or understand that "also in the most chaotic acts performed by humans, God's order is coming to realization; that in the capricious course of humankind's social pursuits and the world's social destiny God reveals the reasonable law of his system, his well-devised plan."⁹⁰ Here Schilder makes a powerful effort to show that the war is not the defeat of Christianity, but that God and his revelation show their veracity in the turmoils of the age. The war is not a sign that God is gone, but a sign that God is coming, that the end is at hand! "Nietzsche is right. But after and above him, there is Scripture."⁹¹ Schilder turns the problem of the war on its head: Instead of a problem defying the existence of God and Christianity's claims, he presents the war as an affirmation of God's sovereign control of history.

In light of Schilder's encounter with Barth in the next period, it is fascinating to note at this point how Schilder deals with the same issues as Barth, albeit in a very different way. Schilder's *Openbaring van Johannes*¹ demands comparison with Barth's *Römerbrief*. Both appear in the wake of the First World War, both deal with the question of how God relates to the war and to history on a broader

⁸⁸Schilder, *Openbaring van Johannes*¹.

⁸⁹Schilder, *Openbaring van Johannes*¹, p. 106.

⁹⁰"dat ook in het meest wanordelijke doen der mensen zich voltrekt de orde Gods; dat in het systeemloos, grillig verloop van 's mensen sociale streven en der wereld sociale lot God de logische wet doet zien van zijn systeem, zijn welberekend plan." (Schilder, *Openbaring van Johannes*¹, p. 69).

⁹¹"Nietzsche krijgt gelijk. Maar na en boven hem de Schrift." (Schilder, *Openbaring van Johannes*¹, p. 126).

scale, both take the exegesis of a New Testament book as their point of departure, and both abound in eschatological language. While there are many similarities between Barth and Schilder, as I will also show below, it is on the central issue of God and history that they clearly depart, thus anticipating their future clash on precisely this point. While Barth's central thesis in the *Römerbrief* is that God and history should be disconnected, Schilder argues exactly the opposite. The horrors of the war that were backed by the theological legitimations of his teachers led Barth to emphasize the distinction between God and humankind. Schilder rather emphasized God's involvement, in spite of the war. As I noted, both Schilder and Barth use eschatological language, but it is also precisely here that the difference lies. For Barth, eschatology belongs to the *jenseits* of history, while for Schilder eschatology concerns this concrete history. While Barth in his *Römerbrief* created a radical distance between God on the one hand and the poor workers of Safenwil and the trenches of the War on the other hand, Schilder draws the uniting bonds even more tightly.⁹²

Schilder's response to the horrors of the Great War is an affirmation of God's concern with history of the *præsentia salutis*. The crisis of the war is not a sign of God's absence, but of the realization of his judgment. Schilder's emphasis may not be different from his *Gereformeerde* contemporaries: Many saw in the war a judgment of God and understood the developments in apocalyptic ways. Its significance lies in the fact that this emphasis will develop into a core theological theme in Schilder that also plays into his ecclesiology. Here we become aware of its genesis as an apology for the horrors of the war. It reveals that for Schilder it is faith that matters, not what we see. Even if nothing is seen of the presence of God, He is still sovereign. This is characteristic of Schilder's approach, also with regard to the church.

2.2.2 Epistemology, Revelation, and Scripture

At the beginning of this section, I listed the problems that figured on the agenda of neo-Calvinism after the war. One of them was epistemology. This topic was part of Schilder's aspirations to deepen the legacy of Kuyper and Bavinck. His clear answer seems to be entirely in line with that of his Calvinist tradition: true knowledge can be found in the Scriptures. In the 1919 brochure *Tegenstrijdigheden in den Bijbel?* (Contradictions in the Bible?), Schilder defends the authority of Scripture as Kuyper has done before him.⁹³ Historical criticism is

⁹²Barth, *Der Römerbrief*, pp. 3-8.

⁹³K. Schilder. *Tegenstrijdigheden in den Bijbel?* Christelijke brochure-reeks Ons Arsenal. Zutphen: Van den Brink, 1919. See also the 1918 series of articles "Bijbelgeloof en Bijbelcritiek" (Biblical faith and biblical criticism), which make a similar statement (Schilder, *VW17-19*, pp. 120-156).

countered with rational and historical arguments that make a case against the supposed contradictions in the Bible. Using many concrete examples, Schilder seeks to prove that the alleged contradictions are not in fact contradictions, but can actually be explained. And if some contradictions or mistakes remain, as he avows, these can be explained by the fact we do not have the biblical autographs, but are forced to use copies that are at times corrupted.⁹⁴ Nothing new thus far.

But there is a second line found in these and other earlier works of Schilder that emphasizes a different approach to the issue of epistemology: the relation between reason and faith. Where I in the previous section emphasized a difference between Barth and Schilder, here there is similarity. More prominent than the classical defense of the trustworthiness of the Bible, it is the relativization of reason in the light of faith that receives Schilder's attention. This parallels the conclusion of the previous section that the viewpoint from faith alone is important for Schilder, and will remain so throughout his work. The gist of this argument is not entirely novel, either: The issue of differing presuppositions was commonplace in neo-Calvinist epistemology.⁹⁵ But Schilder takes up this argument with renewed force and an existential tone. We should look at the Bible "not according to the prescriptions of our thinking, but according to the crying need of our heart that thirsts for God".⁹⁶ Here again the influence of Ibsen and Kierkegaard is obvious: For Schilder it is "all or nothing", as in Ibsen's Brand: "A demonstrable divine Scripture would be unworthy of an undemonstrable divine being."⁹⁷ Here again, radical conversion to God is what is demanded. With regard to God, it is all or nothing. The same atmosphere appears in the meditation "Herhaling" (repetition) published in *Licht in den rook*¹ on Christ's prayer in Gethsemane, where Schilder calls his audience to take this lesson from Gethsemane, namely that we often argue more than we pray. To pray and to think are two different things. Where reflection looks for solid ground, prayer starts from solid ground. Where reflection has to pass through the deep valley to come from one peak to the next, prayer dares to jump. Prayer repeats itself, which lies beyond understanding. Schilder uses many metaphors to show that prayer, as exemplified by Christ, reaches higher than reflection, without nevertheless denying the value of such reflection. But for truthful knowledge, prayer is needed as much as reasoning is.⁹⁸

⁹⁴Schilder, *Tegenstrijdigheden in den Bijbel?*, pp. 15-22.

⁹⁵See, e.g., H. Bavinck. *Christelijke wetenschap*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1904, pp. 27-43.

⁹⁶Schilder, *VW17-19*, p. 153 "niet volgens voorschrift van ons denken maar volgens de schreiende behoefte van ons naar God dorstend hart".

⁹⁷Schilder, *Tegenstrijdigheden in den Bijbel?*, pp. 63-64 "Een bewijsbare goddelijke Schriftuur zou beneden de waardigheid van een onbewijsbaar goddelijk wezen zijn". Schilder explicitly quotes Ibsen's "all or nothing" a few lines earlier.

⁹⁸Schilder, *Licht in den rook*¹, pp. 183-189.

In the meditation “Licht in den rook” (The light in the smoke), which shares its title with the aforementioned book in which it was published, Schilder’s struggle with epistemology becomes all the more clear. The smoking furnace and the flaming torch of Genesis 15 show how God reveals himself: a light in the smoke. This is, Schilder says, a law for all times. It is how God reveals himself, also today. When God appears, the light shines too bright for us, and so he at the same time also hides himself: the smoke. It is not difficult to recognize in the smoke of Abraham’s vision the powder smoke of the Great War that had, in the impression of many, blurred the sight on God. Schilder even makes the connection explicit: “[...]a world full of anti-christian miracles, which seem to make a mockery of all faith: the smoke!”⁹⁹ Do not forget, Schilder comforts his readers, that God’s revelation is always hidden and partial, even in the close association with his friend Abraham. How much more will God be hidden in the clash of the nations that the world has just witnessed! Berkouwer rightly remarks about *Licht in den rook* that “the problem of the relationship between revelation and hiddenness was not first handed to us by dialectical theology.”¹⁰⁰ Indeed, well before Barth became known in the Low Countries, Schilder tabled the problem of God’s hiddenness as Barth did so in the German context.¹⁰¹

Schilder continues the battles Kuyper had fought against the *ethische* theology, especially with J.H. Gunning jr.¹⁰² The war, however, had added given the question additional relevance, and it would become one of the most hotly debated topics among the Reformed in the first half of the twentieth century. Schilder’s Kierkegaard-inspired existential approach that stems from his student years seamlessly fit the post-war milieu. As such, it is an expression of the same emphasis on the *præsentia salutis*. Just as God is concretely and tangibly present in history, even in the horrors of the war, so God is also tangibly present in Scripture. The confrontation with Barth from 1926 onwards once again proves insightful. In Schilder’s opposition to Barth, the relationship between God and history and the question of revelation go hand in hand. Barth’s dissociation of God and history is for Schilder the flip-side of the way God’s concrete revelation

⁹⁹Schilder, *Licht in den rook*¹, p. 267. “[...] een wereld vol anti-christelijke wondertekenen, die met alle geloof schijnen te spotten: de rook!”

¹⁰⁰G. C. Berkouwer. *De persoon van Christus*. Dogmatische studiën. Kampen: Kok, 1952, p. 312.

¹⁰¹The first mention of Barth in the Dutch ecclesial press is by F.W. Grosheide, “Karl Barth’s verklaring van den brief aan de Romeinen” in: *De Reformatie* 3-28 (13-04-1923), 220-221. This is a year earlier than Susanne Hennecke has claimed, pointing to H. Windisch in the *Nieuw Theologisch Tijdschrift* 13 in 1924 as the first review of his Romans commentary (S. Hennecke. *Karl Barth in den Niederlanden: Teil 1: Theologische, kulturelle und politische Rezeptionen (1919-1960)*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck et Ruprecht, 2014, pp. 42-43).

¹⁰²See Kuyper’s address A. Kuyper. *De hedendaagsche Schrifcritiek in haar bedenkelijke strekking voor de Gemeente des levenden Gods*. Amsterdam: J.H. Kruyt, 1881.

dissipates in vapor in the paradoxical knowledge of God. Both these lines are already clearly present in the early Schilder, and they have to be understood not only in the light of his Kuyperian background, but also in the light of his own existential approach and the crisis of the war.

Schilder's existential approach, however, also puts him on a track that will develop into a departure from Kuyper and Bavinck. It is precisely the dialectical element, inspired by Kierkegaard-Ibsen, parallel to Barth, that is responsible for this departure. The dialectic of light and smoke, and of prayer and reasoning, which we saw in the meditations represents a radical line in Schilder where faith is an almost irrational, existential leap undergirding everything, a leap of all or nothing.¹⁰³ This is why obedience becomes a key word in Schilder's theology. The central question here is not: Are we convinced?, but rather: Do we want to submit ourselves to the Word of God? During this period Schilder still adheres to the idea of common grace without reservation.¹⁰⁴ In his mature commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, however, common grace is subjected to radical critique. Moreover, also general revelation is criticized by Schilder and the possibility of apologetics denied. Schilder's early Kierkegaardian, existential approach to revelation puts him on a dialectical track that will grow stronger over the years (see section 4.3.1).

The early Schilder's 'dialectical' side should not, however, be understood as tending to a relativization of reason as such, so as to put him at odds with his later critique on Barth's concept of revelation, and of the paradox in particular. From 1926 onwards, Schilder will emphasize against Barth that God in his revelation does not ask for a *sacrificium intellectus*: "Faith is not a 'sacrificium intellectus'; it does not sacrifice reasonable thinking (on the contrary, it is sanctified, purified, restored, and redeemed)."¹⁰⁵ Schilder's kierkegaardian emphasis on the nearly irrational leap of faith and the stress on smoke rather than light may suggest a turn in his thought on this point. In the 1951 edition of *Licht in den rook*, Schilder did add numerous caveats and changes to the meditation "Herhaling" that seem to confirm such a change. In 1924 he writes that prayer makes a leap "that unites what is irreconcilable for reason".¹⁰⁶ In the light of his polemic with Barth, Schilder could not republish this as it was. For this reason, the

¹⁰³See Schilder, *Licht in den rook*¹, p. 183, where Schilder explicitly uses the language of a leap that is required for prayer and not for reasoning.

¹⁰⁴See, e.g., Schilder, *OWK IV*, pp. 138, 143 and K. Schilder. *Om woord en kerk: deel II*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1949, p. 208.

¹⁰⁵"het geloof is geen 'sacrificium intellectus'; het offert het redelijk denken niet op (het wordt er integendeel in geheiligd, gezuiverd, hersteld, verlost)." K. Schilder. *Tusschen ja en neen: verzamelde opstellen*. Kampen: Kok, 1929, p. 257. See also the epigraph where Schilder quotes Paul Schempp who criticizes Barth in *Zwischen den Zeiten* on the *sacrificium intellectus*.

¹⁰⁶"[...] die vereenigt, wat voor het denken niet is te vereenigen is." (Schilder, *Licht in den rook*¹, p. 184).

1951 edition reads: “Then is united on authority, what was irreconcilable for helpless, clouded reasoning.”¹⁰⁷ Schilder thus brings his earlier remarks in line with what he wrote against Barth. At the same time, however, the revised text does not conflict with his early ideas. At the beginning of this section, I already described Schilder defending the Bible along classical, rationalist neo-Calvinist lines. Such a defence is alien to the way Barth deals with the historicity of Scripture. Furthermore, as will be explored in greater detail in the next section, Schilder advocated a spirituality of doctrine. Over against “aridity and intellectualism”,¹⁰⁸ Schilder sees the rise of a subjective mysticism. What Schilder wants, however, is a mysticism based on objective dogmas. These doctrines are, after all, products of human reasoning, of “thinking into God’s revealed truth” (see further below section 2.2.3).¹⁰⁹ The early Schilder may emphasize dialectically the necessity of a leap of faith in the epistemological crisis of the 1920s, but he does not relativize reasoning as such. It is reason based on faith, reason shaped by faith: *fides quadrat intellectum*, as Schilder would alter the Anselmian original *fides quærens intellectum* in the 1950s.¹¹⁰

2.2.3 Spirituality

We have now seen how Schilder treated the relationship between God and history and the epistemological questions that were burning issues in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* after the war. Both these topics were key themes in the early Schilder’s work. Both these topics are an expression of what I believe to be the heart of Schilder’s theology, the *præsentia salutis*. We also saw how the notion of faith as a decisive category for both discerning God in history and understanding revelation occupies a prominent place. Before we turn to the church as an exponent of Schilder’s effort to deepen the understanding of the *præsentia salutis*, we need to make one further step. Part of Schilder’s effort to gain in depth was the development of what he called ‘mysticism’, which we today would refer to as ‘spirituality’. This aspect is often overlooked in Schilder, since it gets lost in all the noise of the objective realities of Scripture, church, and covenant that will become so prominent in later years.¹¹¹ This is all the more

¹⁰⁷ “[...] dan wordt op gezag verenigd, wat door het hulpeloze, vertroebelde denken niet te verenigen was.” (K. Schilder. *Licht in de rook*. 3rd ed. Delft: Meinema, 1951, p. 249).

¹⁰⁸ “dorheid en intellectualisme” (Schilder, *OWK IV*, p. 142).

¹⁰⁹ K. Schilder. *Om woord en kerk: deel III*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1951, p. 40.

¹¹⁰ See my J. M. de Jong. “Vierkant verstand: Klaas Schilder over geloof en rede”. In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, pp. 175–186.

¹¹¹ See T. J. S. van Staaldoune. *Om de lijn der Afscheiding: Prof.dr. G.M. den Hartogh en de Vrijmaking van 1944*. Heerenveen: Groen, 2004, p. 490, who describes the spiritual concerns in the 1944 schism, where Schilder played a major role.

so due to its being paired with a strong anti-subjective critique of the mysticism Schilder found in his churches. The existential tone we have seen in Schilder in his student years and in his early pastorate should make the reader attentive to signs of a spirituality in Schilder's work. We already noted above that Schilder's crisis of faith and experience of loneliness in his student years led him to the community of the church. It is along those lines that Schilder's emphasis on objective realities has to be understood: it is motivated by and accompanied with a deep spirituality. Given especially the church as the topic of this study, it is important not to lose sight of this central element in Schilder's thought. For Schilder the objective reality of the covenant and the church was not opposed to mysticism, but the very object of that mysticism.

Before I substantiate this claim, it is important to take into account the context in which Schilder operates when it comes to spirituality. The elephant in the room of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* was the Dutch pietistic tradition called the *Nadere Reformatie* (Further Reformation). In the course of the 17th century, a particular form of pietism developed in the Netherlands. This movement grew in parallel to the other European pietistic revivals, but also had a particular character. Like the broader current, the focus was individualistic and on the renewal of the heart. In the Low Countries it developed along Calvinistic lines, with a particular emphasis on the doctrine of predestination. The central question became: am I elect? Adherence to a church or confession was not considered sufficient, and the necessity of an inner experience (*bevinding*) was posited for obtaining assurance of salvation. In general this movement did not separate from the public church, but created groups within the church, and at times entire congregations bore the marks of this Dutch pietism.¹¹² The influence of this renewal movement extended well into the 20th century. Large groups that stood in this tradition had also joined the 1834 *Afscheiding* and ended up in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. Schilder himself was closely confronted with this tradition in his pastoral ministry. The churches in Vlaardingen and Gorinchem in particular, which he served from 1916 to 1922, were strongly influenced by the tradition of the *Nadere Reformatie*.¹¹³

The nineteenth-century neo-Calvinism of Kuyper and Bavinck can be interpreted as an attempt to emancipate these orthodox pietistic groups from

¹¹²W. van Asselt and P. H. A. M. Abels. "De zeventiende eeuw". In: *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*. Ed. by H. Selderhuis. 3rd ed. Utrecht: Kok, 2014, pp. 367–501, pp. 476–480 (ET W. van Asselt and P. H. A. M. Abels. "The Seventeenth Century". In: *Handbook of Dutch Church History*. Ed. by H. Selderhuis. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014, pp. 259–360, pp. 338–341)

¹¹³See Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, p. 287. Dee disagrees with Ridderbos's claim that Schilder's mother was shaped by this tradition. Indeed, Ridderbos provides no proof for his claim (Ridderbos, "Van Molenstraat naar Oudestraat", p. 126).

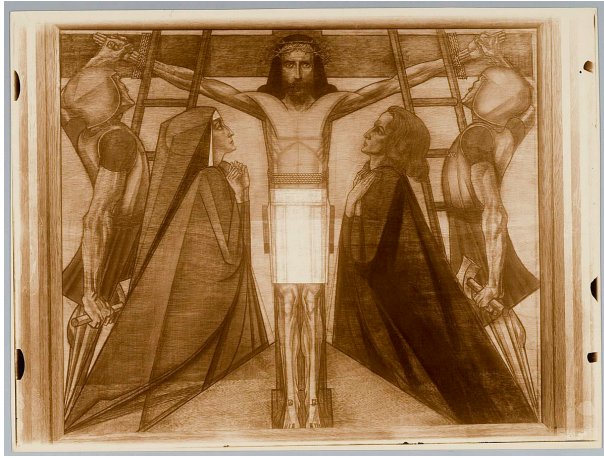


Figure 2.2: ‘Elfde Kruiswegstatie. Jezus wordt aan het kruis genageld’ by Jan Toorop (1917). Current location unknown.

within the walls of their churches and to provide them with a public voice in the academy, the press, education, and politics.¹¹⁴ Kuyper did not succeed in winning the trust of all these groups, and many were deeply suspicious of his ‘worldly’ and activist theology. For Kuyper himself, mysticism or spirituality was an important part of his life and work.¹¹⁵ Kuyper treated the dangers of mysticism on the one hand and intellectualism and practicism on the other. Kuyper also distinguished between false and true mysticism, a distinction that will be taken up by Schilder.¹¹⁶ It is in this context as well that Schilder’s treatment of spirituality must be placed.

The intellectualist critique was a favorite trope of the renewers in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.¹¹⁷ Schilder agreed with this critique, and in his 1921 article “Aesthetische Christusbeschouwing” (Aesthetic Contemplation of Christ)¹¹⁸ he developed it. The essay starts as a critical review of how Christus is depicted in

¹¹⁴Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper*, pp. 50-51.

¹¹⁵See C. G. Bartholomew. *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017, pp. 13-34 and A. L. T. de Bruijne. “Midden in de wereld verliefd op God. Kuyper’s aanzet tot een neocalvinistische spiritualiteit.” In: *Godsvrucht in de geschiedenis. Bundel ter gelegenheid van het afscheid van prof. dr. F. van der Pol als hoogleraar aan de Theologische Universiteit Kampen*. Ed. by E. A. de Boer and H. J. Boiten. Heerenveen: Groen, 2015, pp. 441-453 for Kuyper’s spirituality.

¹¹⁶A. Kuyper. *Drie kleine vossen*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1901, p. 48.

¹¹⁷See the—at the time—famous brochure J. C. Aalders. *Veruitwendigen onze kerken?* Kampen: Kok, 1916.

¹¹⁸Schilder, *OWK IV*, pp. 110-149.

works of contemporary art, and particularly in poetry. Schilder denounces the lifelessness and sterile beauty of Christ in these artistic expressions, and the way such art ignores the raw biblical reality of suffering and pain. Schilder finds such depictions of Christ in poetry, but also in the paintings of the Dutch Jan Toorop, for example (figure 2.2). As a counter example, Schilder points to the German Renaissance painter Matthias Grünewald (figure 2.3).¹¹⁹ His critique is not limited to Roman Catholic or secular artists, but includes poets from his own *Gereformeerde Kerken*.¹²⁰ Schilder then ends by provocatively expressing his preference for Nietzsche's militant atheism over such Christian art: "For Nietzsche, at least, the cross is lively, dynamic, and in motion until death; but for the Christ-poets of our time, the still-life and still-death poets, the rigid image of the staring Christ becomes as beautiful as the facial features of a soft and sweet dead man for which misty eyes are searching."¹²¹ The critique, however, is not where Schilder ends. The article does not close with a call to go to church rather than to enjoy art, but with a twofold plea. First, Schilder pleads with the church to engage with art and to seek to understand the soul of the artist, rather than to approach him in arrogance. Schilder writes: "He [the artist] is also right, completely right, when he requests our attention for the life of his soul. We must, then, be grateful for the manner in which the objective revelation is reflected in his soul, according to his own character and variation."¹²² I will return to Schilder's engagement with the arts in the next section (2.3.1). The second item is already here. Schilder asks why this 'aesthetic contemplation of Christ' came about in the first place. His answer is that it represented a response to a dry intellectualism. Just as much as these contemporary poets need proper doctrine for their art, so too our doctrine needs art: "No doctrine without mysticism. No mysticism without doctrine. No inspiration without aspiration. No aspiration without inspiration. Let not our aesthetics shape Christ, but let Christ shape our aesthetics. The living Christ, the real Christ, the Christ of the Scriptures."¹²³

¹¹⁹Schilder, *OWK IV*, pp. 121-122.

¹²⁰Schilder, *OWK IV*, 135-139.

¹²¹"Want voor Nietzsche is het kruis tenminste een stuk leven, beweeglijk, en bewegend tot den dood; maar voor de Christusdichters van onzen tijd, de stil-leven- en stil-sterven-dichters, wordt het starre beeld van den starenden Christus zoo mooi als de door wazige oogen gezochte gelaatsstreken van een zachten, lieven doode." (Schilder, *OWK IV*, 125-126).

¹²²"[...] hij zijnerzijds óók gelijk, volmaakt gelijk, wanneer hij ook eens aandacht vraagt voor zijn zieleven, en dan moeten we ook dankbaar zijn voor de wijze, waarop de objectieve openbaring in zijn ziel, naar eigen aard, en naar eigen variatie, weerspiegeling vindt." Schilder, *OWK IV*, p. 142.

¹²³"Geen dogmatiek zonder mystiek. Maar ook geen mystiek zonder dogmatiek. Geen inspiratie zonder aspiratie. Maar ook geen aspiratie zonder inspiratie. Onze aesthetiek vorme Christus niet. Christus vorme onze aesthetiek. De levende. De werkelijke. De Christus der



Figure 2.3: ‘Tauberbischofsheimer Altar’ by Matthias Grünewald (1524). Staatlichen Kunsthalle Karlsruhe.

De Bruijne and Schaeffer suggest that Schilder not only saw the need to develop a Reformed mysticism to balance the intellectualist tendencies in his churches, but also sought to do that himself. They then suggest that his famous trilogy *Christ in his Suffering* was precisely that, an attempt at a distinctly Reformed and contemporary mysticism of doctrine. Schaeffer describes Schilder’s spirituality as “imagining Christ” (*indenken*).¹²⁴ Schilder saw this as an essential part of discipleship and also as a largely untrodden path in the history of the church.¹²⁵ De Bruijne has similarly argued that Schilder saw the need to develop a new, Reformed mysticism, and that his trilogy was Schilder’s attempt to realize such a spirituality.¹²⁶ The trilogy is precisely what Schilder describes as ‘true mysticism’: thinking into the revealed truth, a mysticism of doctrine.¹²⁷ De Bruijne

Schriften.” Schilder, *OWK IV*, p. 147. See, similarly, Schilder, *Licht in den rook*¹, p. 67: “Wandelen met God, dat is: [...] contemplatie en praktijk; het is dogma en mystiek” (“Walking with God is [...] contemplation and practice, doctrine and mysticism”).

¹²⁴Schaeffer, “Schilder mysticus”, pp. 208-209.

¹²⁵See the quote in the previous section above, where Schilder understands “thinking into God’s revealed truth” as one of the church’s tasks (Schilder, *Om woord en kerk: deel III*, p. 40).

¹²⁶A. L. T. de Bruijne. “Schilders vroege spiritualiteit en de latere vrijgemaakten”. In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, pp. 49–80, pp. 57-59, 68-70.

¹²⁷When Schilder announces his trilogy in *De Reformatie*, he emphasizes the degree to which the Reformed confession is central to his meditations: “Reformed thought and vision opens depths that otherwise remain unfindable unless one consciously binds oneself to the confession.”

furthermore points to the characteristic contemplative style of addressing God directly which pervades the entire trilogy.¹²⁸ Both De Bruijne and Schaeffer are correct in emphasizing the extent to which this remained an important impetus for Schilder's theological work throughout his life, despite indications to the contrary that might seem to suggest that Schilder redirected his attention to 'external' realities, such as the church and the covenant, and became entangled in a rational and nearly scholastic theology. De Bruijne rightly notes that Schilder continued to work on the trilogy throughout his life: A second edition of the first two volumes appeared towards the end of his life (with the third remaining unfinished).¹²⁹

In the next chapter (see section 3.3.2), I will elaborate on the way the church is for Schilder not a replacement for mysticism, but that his concern for the church is the expression of the same concern. This fits, again, my broader claim about the consistency of Schilder's thought. The early Schilder's stress on the necessity of a healthy mysticism is not at odds with his later emphasis on the objective realities of church and covenant. For Schilder, mysticism or spirituality, an experiential and personal relationship with God, requires the objective realities of the church, doctrine, and Scripture. When Schilder comes to speak more of the church and less about mysticism, this should not be mistaken for a different understanding of this relationship. That such is not the case will become especially clear in the next period, when Schilder's 'turn to the church' takes place. It is confirmed by what I will demonstrate in the next section, namely that Schilder's later concerns for the church also have their roots in this period, the same period of the 'mystical' Schilder.

2.2.4 The Church

We now finally arrive where we want to be, at Schilder's early ecclesiology. The previous sections were needed in order to tell the story of how the church will become part of Schilder's answer to the crisis the War had brought about. But

("[...] het gereformeerde denken en zien diepten opent, die niet te vinden zijn, tenzij men zich bewust aan zijn belijdenis bindt."). He speaks of the "schemes of thought" (gedachtenschema's) that characterize the trilogy ("Boekaankondiging: K. Schilder, Christus in zijn lijden" in: *De Reformatie* 10-31, p. 246-247 (May 2, 1930)). In the trilogy itself, Schilder repeats the above connection between doctrine and mysticism (K. Schilder. *Christus in zijn lijden: overwegingen van het lijdensevangelie I: Christus aan den ingang van zijn lijden*. 1st ed. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1930, p. 279 (ET K. Schilder. *Christ in His Suffering*. Trans. by H. Zylstra. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1938, p. 280).

¹²⁸E.g.: "Father, Father, *this* cup. Father, this unique cup; there it is, ...the hand that extends it comes from the hills of eternity. **THIS** cup." (Schilder, *Christ in His Suffering*, p. 316). "Vader, Vader, *deze* beker! Vader, die ééne; daar is hij, ...de hand die hem reikt, komt van de bergen der eeuwigheid. **DEZE** drinkbeker ..." (Schilder, *Christus in zijn lijden I*, p. 315).

¹²⁹Bruijne, "Schilders vroege spiritualiteit en de latere vrijgemaakten", pp. 68-70.

his ideas on the church have not yet reached maturity, and we are forced to scour for quotes and brief pieces of text scattered here and there. But we will see how most of his later views relating to the church can already be discerned in this early phase. It is only then that we can come to understand how the stress he placed on the *præsentia salutis* as an answer to the Great War is intimately connected with the ecclesiological emphases that he will develop later on.

A Small Church in the Eschaton The most prominent element in what Schilder writes about the church is its characterization as a small and weak institution positioned in antithesis with ‘the world’. This emphasis can already be discerned in Schilder’s inaugural sermon in 1914, which he preached as the freshly ordained pastor to the church in Ambt-Vollenhove. The sermon, entitled *De zalving van den Heilige* (The anointing of the Holy One), focuses on 1 John 2:20, where John says that “you have been anointed by the Holy One.” This unction, Schilder asserts, puts John’s reader in clear antithesis with the world. It is the holiness of the congregation that marks its separation from the world. It is by faith that the congregation knows more than the world. Yet it is God who by his election and Spirit bestows both holiness and knowledge upon the congregation: “God himself comes in his elect, to put them under his dominion, to withdraw them from the world, that is: To anoint them, to sanctify them until they arrive up there in the spheres of absolute holiness.”¹³⁰ Schilder’s first sermon sketches a Hauerwasian picture of the church, as by definition separate from the world.

In the address Schilder delivered at a missionary gathering of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in the province of South Holland in 1917, he added another element to this notion of the church in antithesis. For not only is the church positioned over against the world, it is also the weaker of the two. This weakness is the gist of Schilder’s speech. Mission is all about telling people “that they are human”, which is also the title of the address, as drawn from Psalm 9. The unbelievers in other countries need to hear that they are people, since they in their idol worship seek to earn their own salvation. This betrays a high esteem for human potential, which is contrary to the teaching of the gospel. The driving force in mission must be to proclaim both the weakness of the human race and the necessity of salvation. Yet Europe needs to learn this just as much. Nietzsche teaches a man of power and the death of God. We have to “remain faithful to Jesus Christ himself and not to the pseudo-Christendom of our days, which cries out ‘Forward with God’, when ten thousands fall, and adorns the princes of the

¹³⁰“God zelf komt in zijn uitverkorenen, om ze onder zijn heerschappij te brengen, om ze *aan de wereld te onttrekken*, dat is: om ze te *zalven*, om ze te heiligen tot ze komen kunnen daarboven in de sferen der absolute heiligheid.” Schilder, *VWPreken I*, p. 25.

brutal war with the Grand Cross of the Savior's Order – or whatever...".¹³¹ Schilder then ends his speech in a dramatic and nearly prophetic style, offering us a glimpse of how he viewed the church, namely as a small group of the true 'Israel' that is in great danger, at risk of being "swallowed up in the broad streams of furious and raging paganism. Or have you not yet seen the signs of the end times?"¹³² Schilder foresees a minority Christendom in Europe, with a small and insignificant church. Mission then becomes all the more urgent because "we will need our black brothers in the battle against our pagan whites! That will be 'communion of saints'."¹³³ Schilder foresaw what is today commonplace in missiology, that Christianity's center of gravity would shift to what had once been the mission countries. In a cultural and ecclesiastical climate where racism was still quite normal, this must have been a rather extraordinary claim. To us it shows that Schilder understood very well that the world was changing and that the time of Christendom as the prevailing cultural climate had definitively passed. The emphasis would be placed increasingly on the church, on a small and weak church opposed to a hostile world.

Two years later in 1919, in the first imprint of the booklet *Wat is de hel?* (What is Hell?), we find a similar tone with regard to the church. There Schilder speaks of the "weakening voice of the church" over against the "ever more violent speech of culture and history."¹³⁴ This should, however, not be mistaken for cultural pessimism, for it is eschatology. This eschatological framework in which to understand the church is developed in a meditation published in 1923 and entitled "*Vluchten en vliegen*" (Fleeing and Flying).¹³⁵ Here Schilder identifies the church with the woman of Revelation 12. The woman in the desert flees before the dragon, but this fleeing becomes flying as she is given a pair of wings. In her weakness, she is made strong. Her fate has turned into a choice. The church is not of this world: it flees. But the church flies high above this world. Flying and fleeing integrate. Even if the church's position becomes ever more marginal, it should not forsake her vocation for this world. The desert of the

¹³¹"[...] maar dat we dan toch getrouw blijven aan Jezus Christus zelf en niet aan een schijn-christendom onzer dagen, dat daar roept 'Vooruit met God', als er tienduizenden vallen en dat de grootvorsten van den plompen krijg tooit met het grootkruis van de orde van den zaligmaker – of zoo iets..." (Schilder, *VW17-19*, p. 1).

¹³²"[...] dan is er gevaar voor de kleine groep van dat ware Israël 't welk in de breede stroomen van razend en tierend heidendom dreigt verzwolgen te worden. Of merkt gij nog niet op de teekenen der tijden?" (Schilder, *VW17-19*, p. 93).

¹³³"Onze 'bruine' broeders hebben we ook straks nodig, straks in den strijd tegen onze heidensche blanken! Dat zal zijn 'gemeenschap der heiligen.'" (Schilder, *VW17-19*, pp. 93-4).

¹³⁴"Nietwaar, in de laatste jaren heeft niet zoozeer de verzwakkende stem van de kerk, als wel de al geweldiger spraak der cultuur en der historie de wereld toegeschreeuwd de realiteit der zonde." (Schilder, *Wat is de hel?*¹, p. 68).

¹³⁵Schilder, *Licht in den rook*¹, pp. 25-31.

alienated church should become the beginning of the conquering of the world. Here we see the typical Kuypertian motive of an active public church. And yet, already here we find Schilder struggling with his Kuypertian heritage. Kuypers' call to bring the church "in sync with the times" seems to demand a more modest approach: Conquering, maybe, but in weakness abiding the final conquering of the coming Lord. This image of the church in Revelation 12 will stay with Schilder throughout his life as an important motif in his understanding of the church.¹³⁶

At other times the "flying" aspect of the church is entirely absent. In the meditation on Genesis 15, which we also discussed above, Abraham waits for the Lord to come to seal the covenant, but instead he sees a smoking furnace and a burning torch. This is how God reveals himself: light in the smoke, Schilder explains. God covers his revelation in order not to harm humankind. Light, the promise; smoke, the reality. And then Schilder turns to the church, where we see the themes of depth and breadth return: "Christ in his glorification: the light. But the battle for His church all the heavier: the smoke. The congregation growing in the depths: the light; but at the same time losing in breadth: the smoke! Faith all the more proof of things unseen: the light; but in the end a world full of anti-Christian miracles which mock all faith: the smoke! Light in the smoke!"¹³⁷ Here we see Schilder's struggle with his time. He is saying that many things in our time are clear: a devastating war, anti-christian philosophies and ideologies. They appear to have the truth and the future. Where is God in all this? Such is the climate in these meditations: struggle, battle, and agony. The smoke of the guns and canons blurs the sight on God, Schilder avows, but God is still there, there is light in the smoke! For Schilder, it seems, loss and gain, struggle and victory, belong to the experience of a Christian and thus to that of the church. Flying and fleeing; light and smoke, such is the plight of the church in a hostile world. The frame is once again that of eschatology: Read the Bible and see how struggle and pain are precisely what the church has to expect at the end of times. God is in the world's struggles and agony. They are

¹³⁶See, e.g., K. Schilder. *Christus in zijn lijden: overwegingen van het lijdensevangelie III: Christus bij den uitgang van zijn lijden*. 1st ed. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1930, pp. 337-339 K. Schilder. "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven". In: H. L. Both and N. Buffinga. *Jezus Christus en het menschenleven*. Culemborg: De Pauw, 1932, p. 276, K. Schilder. *Schriftoverdenkingen*. Ed. by C. Veenhof. Vol. 3. Verzamelde werken II. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1958, pp. 161-163 and K. Schilder. *Heidelbergsche catechismus: zondag 5-7*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1949, p. 277.

¹³⁷"Christus in verheerlijking: het licht. Maar de strijd voor Zijn kerk te zwaarder daardoor: de rook. De gemeente groeiend in de diepte; het licht; maar tegelijk verliezend in de breedte; de rook! Het geloof al meer een bewijs van de dingen, die men niet ziet; het licht; maar in het eind een wereld vol van anti-christelijke wondertekenen, die met alle geloof schijnen te spotten: de rook! Licht in den rook!" (Schilder, *Licht in den rook*¹, pp. 266-267).

his judgment.

Schilder's eschatological reading of contemporary history dominates his early view on the church. In the sparse and scattered writings on the church from the early period, this element surfaces clearly, more than any other element does. The eschatological element will recede somewhat into the background, only to reappear in the final period (see section 5.1.2). In the next section I will detail how this explicit eschatological element may move to the background, while its defining force for Schilder's perception of the church nevertheless remains.

Church of All or Nothing Schilder's writings on the church are dominated by an eschatological framework. It is in this framework that the Ibsian notion of 'all or nothing', which I also described in the context of his student years, is applied to the church. This will become a defining feature of Schilder's ecclesiology, filling his idea of the covenant as it develops in the 1930s and becoming a key rationale for the schism in the 1940s.

In Schilder's inaugural sermon, discussed above, which in many ways is exemplary for his views on the church, we also encountered the notion of the church's holiness. As we saw, Schilder understands the church as anointed by the Holy One. This unction is meant to sanctify the church, paralleling the radical call to holiness: "Be holy for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44-45, 1 Peter 1:16).¹³⁸ This holiness does not in the first place refer to ethical or virtuous holiness, but rather to the act of surrender or dedication to God. Especially in his earliest sermons preached during the war, his audience, the church, is called to such a holiness. In his Pentecost sermon from 1916 preached in Vlaardingen, Schilder denounces what he calls "wayward religion" (*eigenwillige godsdienst*). It is something that may look good outwardly, and very pious or religious. But if it does not submit to the absolute authority of God, then it is wayward religion. If our church attendance and practices are not according to God's will, they have no value. Whoever transgresses one commandment, has transgressed them all, as Schilder will repeatedly remind his readers throughout his oeuvre. This critique, Schilder warns his audience, is emphatically meant for those who go to church: "Do not forget: Being *gereformeerd* or a regular churchgoer does not save you."¹³⁹ The danger is the greatest for those who know the will of God. This alarming tone has an even more unsettling note in a sermon on 1 Peter 4:17a: "For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God", which Schilder preached in Vlaardingen in 1918. There he preaches about the judgment of God which is visible in the world but also, first and foremost, in

¹³⁸Schilder, *VWPreken I*, p. 30.

¹³⁹"Vergeet niet: gereformeerd zijn of kerkganger maakt nog niet zalig." (Schilder, *VWPreken I*, pp. 135-146).

the church. There is but one judgment of the Lord and that judgment is visible in history. It begins with God's own people and then reaches out to the world. There are many sins in the world, but they are also in the church. Should we not expect judgment also in the church, and especially there? "The *house of God*. Do you not tremble as you hear *these words*? *You, you* are the primary target of the lightning flashes of God's wrath."¹⁴⁰ And, here again, Schilder asserts that the sins of the church are more terrible than those of the world. It is the high tower of the church that attracts the lightning.

This critique is directed from the pulpit towards his own people, his own church. But also towards other churches Schilder expresses his criticism. In the above sermon on wayward religion, the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* is brought up as an example of such religion. Its ideal of a *volkskerk* is, according to Schilder, an example of pious talk which forgets God's actual command.¹⁴¹ Here Schilder echoes Kuyper's well-known critique on the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* and his discussion with Philip Hoedemaker (see above), while simultaneously anticipating his own polemic with Theo Haitjema (1888-1972), of which we will see much more below (see section 3.1.2). Over against the *volkskerk*, a free church is posited as a better alternative. That church is free from the burden of service to the nation and people of the Netherlands, and free to obey God's command.

For Schilder, the church should be a holy church, a church that is marked by a readiness for obedience. Whether it be in the announcement of God's judgment on his own congregation, or in his critique of other churches, for Schilder every church must submit to the command of God. Obedience, a permanent pursuit of holiness, should characterize the church. The war and the eschatological reading of his time lead Schilder not to point to the church as a safe haven, a place of rest and peace for the weary Christian. On the contrary, the church is a place where things matter most, it is the place where the struggle between christ and anti-christ will be felt most strongly. The Christian life is eschatological: It is characterized by 'all or nothing', by obedience to God's Word. The focal point of that obedience is for Schilder the church. The deepening of the Christian life Schilder wants to promulgate starts in the church. The small and weak church in the whirlwind of the end of times in an anti-christian world should see obedience as its prime vocation. The stakes are higher than ever. It should also be noted how epistemology and ecclesiology are already intertwined, as they will become in even clearer fashion in the next period. Existential obedience to Scripture is an ecclesial reality. The church depends on the Word of God for its existence. Obedience to that Word is thus the defining

¹⁴⁰"Het *huis Gods*. Trilt ge wel op uw grondvesten, als ge *dat woord* hoort? *Gij, gij* zijt het eerste mikpunt van den bliksemenden toorn van God." (Schilder, *VWPreken I*, p. 183).

¹⁴¹Schilder, *VWPreken I*, p. 143.

feature of the church. The Word of God is essential for the church. This is what Berkouwer aptly calls the early Schilder's "critical ecclesiology", and he rightly draws parallels with the early Karl Barth. From this element Berkouwer goes on to draw lines to Schilder's aversion to talking about the church empirically.¹⁴² This echoes what we noted under the section on revelation, namely that Schilder reasoned from faith, not from sight. In this critical ecclesiology, this same emphasis is applied to the church. And here we find the roots for Schilder's dynamic ecclesiology: That the church is never static, but always on the move to follow its head, the living Christ (see section 3.3.3). This reasoning from the ideal, from faith, will also lead to Schilder's critique on the doctrine of the pluriformity of the church (see section 4.2.1), which is also already visible in this period.

One Church This call to obedience in the light of eschatology finds a characteristic expression in the call to unity, the topic to which we will now turn. Church unity was a hotly debated issue in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in the first decades of the twentieth century, figuring also on the list of pressing topics in *De Reformatie* I quoted above. The discussion focused on the interpretation of articles 27 to 29 in the Belgic Confession on the church. The reason for this debate was to be found in the widely accepted Kuyperian notion of the pluriformity of the church. Kuyper had introduced this idea to provide a rationale for the division in Christianity. According to him, all the different denominations together form the one true church. Their variety reflects the many colors of God's creation and ultimately his own nature. Just as there are different nations, different races, different languages, and different animals, so there are different churches. For Kuyper this idea also helped him to sustain his choice to separate from the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*. Now he had grounds to acknowledge many good churches within that church, which had not followed him into the *Doleantie*. Moreover, he could now cooperate with these churches in the sphere of politics. The consequent debate revolved around the statement of the confession that there is "no salvation outside of the church". In 1918 a request was made to the synod to remove that phrase from the confession.¹⁴³ The synod of 1920, however, saw no need for altering the article, and the Free University came to a similar position.¹⁴⁴ In their view, the confession could be interpreted

¹⁴²Berkouwer, *Zoeken en vinden*, pp. 246-252.

¹⁴³C. Buizer. *Een aanslag op de gewetensvrijheid in de Gereformeerde Kerken (Het rapport aan de classis Middelburg in zake de quaestie Ds. J. B. Netelenbos). Met een wederantwoord op de Herautartikelen over het gravamen tegen Artt. 27-30 der geloofsbelijdenis*. Amsterdam: A.H. Kruyt, 1918.

¹⁴⁴*Acta der Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland gehouden te Leeuwarden van 24 augustus tot 9 september 1920*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1920, pp. 62-63.

to include pluriformity. The confession was taken to be referring to the invisible church in a general manner when it claimed that no salvation is to be found outside of the church. The synodical decision did not quench the fire, however. And Schilder was eager to fuel it.¹⁴⁵

For the time being, however, Schilder did not participate in the debate. In the light of his later polemics over the issue of pluriformity and his position on the invisible church, Schilder's failure to engage in any discussion on the church's pluriformity at all is nothing less than striking. More than anything, it shows that the church per se was not the focus of Schilder's attention during this first period, as it would indeed be in subsequent years. Culture and the arts, as I will show below, and eschatology and spirituality, as we saw above, were the topics that had his attention for the time being. Clearly, his later critique is not yet present, and Schilder, like he does on many other issues, still follows the consensus.¹⁴⁶ Looking back on this period in 1947, Schilder himself was to call his earlier position "naïve" with regard to another issue on which he ended up changing his mind.¹⁴⁷ This is true on a broader scale, also when it comes to pluriformity. In 1918, in his first publication ever, which addressed Darbyism, Schilder reflects this consensus on the issue of church unity. On the one hand, Schilder grants John Darby (1800-1882) that the division of churches is indeed painful.¹⁴⁸ Two legitimate churches cannot coexist separately. On the other hand, Schilder is quick to follow Kuyper in saying that the sin of division will unfortunately stay: "The unity in Christ exists to the extent that all believers are one in Christ." It is our duty to "pursue that unity and to come as close as possible to it."¹⁴⁹ Without any hint of criticism, Schilder then quotes Bavinck on the degrees of purity existing among different churches of the Protestant

¹⁴⁵For an overview of the debate, see Endedijk, *De Gereformeerde Kerken 1*, pp. 138-140, 143-146. For a critical voice in the debate, see G. Doekes. *De moeder der geloovigen*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1910 from within the *Gereformeerde Kerken*; and, from Roman Catholic side, T. F. Bendsdorp. *De pluriformiteit der waarheid: een fundamentele misvatting van Dr. A. Kuyper of een hopeloos pleidooi: eene studie over Dr. Kuyper's pluriformiteitsstelsel*. Amsterdam: Borg, 1901.

¹⁴⁶Batteau makes a similar argument about Schilder's early ecclesiology (Batteau, "Schilder on the Church", pp. 66-67). He omits to mention, however, that the roots of changes in later years lie in this period, as I will argue below.

¹⁴⁷This issue was the changes the *Gereformeerde Kerken* had made in article 36 of the Belgic Confession concerning the role of the government in protecting orthodoxy. Towards the end of his life, Schilder became critical of this alteration and pleaded for the original text of the article to be restored ("Zelfstanding optreden in de politiek" in: *De Reformatie* 22-46, p. 371 (August 16, 1947)).

¹⁴⁸John Darby was a minister in the Church of Ireland who eventually separated and became one of the founders of the Brethren, an anti-clerical church. The brethren also founded community's in the Netherlands in the second half on the nineteenth century.

¹⁴⁹"Die eenheid is er voorzover alle gelovigen in Christus één zijn [...] Die eenheid hebben we na te streven en zoo dicht mogelijk te benaderen." (Schilder, *VW17-19*, p. 173).

family, avoiding the label of false churches for them.¹⁵⁰ At the time Schilder is thus uncritical in following the consensus on the pluriformity of the church with different degrees of purity, a concept he will later subject to forceful criticism.

As with many of the other issues, however, the seeds of Schilder's later critique are nevertheless already visible. When Schilder moved from Ambt-Vollenhove to Vlaardingen in December 1916, he was confronted with tensions between the 'A' (*Afscheiding*) church and the 'B' (*Doleantie*) church in Vlaardingen. Already in Ambt-Vollenhove the churches of the two traditions that had officially merged in 1892 failed to get along. Attempts to unite the two were even given up during Schilder's pastorate there. Whether or not he accepted the situation in Ambt-Vollenhove is not known, but he at least did not publicly speak out against the separation.¹⁵¹ When he arrived in Vlaardingen that changed immediately. There the process of merging the two congregations was undertaken by the church leaders, notwithstanding the resistance of many in the congregations. For Schilder, this was a matter of principle.¹⁵² In fact, the very first article he wrote for the local church periodical in February 1917 addresses this issue. Modestly yet clearly Schilder writes that the saying that "in heaven no one will ask for this or that church, or for A and B" is false. Nothing will remain hidden, Schilder warns, and the present situation is one of "sinful division".¹⁵³ During his years in Vlaardingen he never ceases emphasizing the absolute necessity for unity. Unity between A and B, but also with the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*. "Whoever does not *congregate* with Christ, he – scatters", Schilder writes in 1919.¹⁵⁴ The matter of unification was complicated due to the permanent threat that A-members would leave for the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*. In an article later that year, Schilder adopts a harsher tone. Characteristically, it is the hypocrisy in particular that Schilder defies. Quoting from the Belgic Confession, he states that there is but one true church, and that everyone is called to join it. If the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* is the true church, we should go there right away. If it is not, we should stay away from it altogether, but the threat of transferring one's membership is unfair to the confession.¹⁵⁵ The end of the article makes clear how for Schilder this issue of the true church is not a matter of theological nitpicking, but of utmost importance. It is worth quoting Schilder at length:

The power of the world is organizing itself. The Antichrist is approaching. Who has the courage now to profess before the face of

¹⁵⁰Schilder, *VW17-19*, p. 174.

¹⁵¹Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, pp. 39-70.

¹⁵²Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, pp. 87-90.

¹⁵³Schilder, *VW17-19*, p. 26.

¹⁵⁴"Wie niet met Christus *vergaert*, die – verstroot." (Schilder, *VW17-19*, p. 276).

¹⁵⁵Schilder, *VW17-19*, pp. 281-283.

God his intention to aid in crumbling, shattering, and scattering the church? If the church is out for rift, it supports the revolution. And then it is *the devil* who laughs.¹⁵⁶

It seems that the situation in Vlaardingen, and the division between A and B churches in the light of his eschatological reading of world history, are beginning to change Schilder's view on the unity of the church.¹⁵⁷ The issue of the unity of the church increasingly becomes a pressing matter for him. In a world that is on fire, Christianity cannot allow itself separation and unclarity. In a world where the signs of the end times are nigh, Christians should unite and keep hypocrisy at bay. Obedience becomes all the more urgent. And concrete obedience becomes visible in the unity of the church. In what it means to be obedient to Christ in matters of ecclesiology, it is the unity of the church that takes on increasing significance for Schilder.

Confessing Church According to Schilder, there is another matter on which the church ought to permit itself no unclarity, namely its confession. In his booklet on Darby and the Darbyites, this element comes to the fore when Schilder addresses their view on the church. Darby held that the church ought to be open, as a matter of principle without boundaries, confession, or ecclesial discipline. It should be open for the free working of the Spirit. Schilder criticizes Darby for what he believes to be a false contradiction. The Spirit, says Schilder, does not only send fire, he also provides knowledge. And this knowledge is what churches have expressed in their confessions.¹⁵⁸ In the transcript of the catechism classes he gave in Delft in 1923, a rare species of a more systematic treatment of theology from Schilder's hand in this period, we perceive a similar line of thought. Unity is very important for the church, it is what the church should always pursue. But unity ought not to come at the cost of the confession.¹⁵⁹ In a series of articles on the church from 1921, one of the few, Schilder shows why he believes a confessional church to be so important: "Everyone in the world drafts their programs and adorns their banners with gripping slogans. If each political party becomes clear in its confessional identity, and distinguishes

¹⁵⁶"De macht der wereld organiseert zich. De Antichrist komt dichterbij. Wie heeft nu den moed om voor Gods aangezicht zijn voornemen te belijden, dat hij mee wil helpen aan het verbrokkelen, versplinteren, verstrooien van de kerk? Als de kerk op scheuring bedacht is, dan helpt ze de revolutie. En wie er lacht, *dat is de duivel*." (Schilder, VW17-19, p. 283).

¹⁵⁷See "Volstrekt niet waar", "Ineensmelting", "Open Briefje", and "Het komt" in Schilder, VW17-19, 260ff, where Schilder's growing concern over the topic of ecclesial unity is visible in the course of 1919.

¹⁵⁸Schilder, VW17-19, pp. 172-174.

¹⁵⁹K. Schilder. *Catechisatie-dictaat Delft 1923*. 1923, p. 18.

its own standpoint all the more, should the church then look for its salvation with no clear sense of its own standpoint?"¹⁶⁰

The importance of the confession was commonplace in both the Kuyperian and Secession traditions. Schilder defends the *Gereformeerde Kerken* against Darbyism along predictable lines. He does not enter into great detail as to how exactly this confession functions. What makes this pamphlet worth noting, however, is the connection Schilder draws between the confession of the church and confessions of 'the world'. It is his context that sets Schilder on the track of stressing the importance of the confession. In later years, this seed will grow into an important line in Schilder's thought on the church. Apocalyptic times demand a robust church, which for Schilder means an obedient church, a united church, and a confessional church. In a secularizing world it becomes increasingly clear that the church is essential for the *praesentia salutis*.

2.2.5 Conclusion

We have seen how the young Schilder draws the contours of what he understood as the necessary renewal for his Reformed context in the vertical dimension. The war and the subsequent crisis of European Christianity added to the death of the towering figures of Bavinck and Kuyper, creating a sense of crisis in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. Schilder draws the beginning of his answer to that crisis. An inward look is the first part of his answer, and this inward look is for Schilder an upward look. Voiced in the existential language of his time, filled to the brim with apocalyptic notions, Schilder asks for radical concreteness. The notion of the *praesentia salutis* that will grow to become the most prominent theme in Schilder's thought is an important part of his response: God is truly and concretely present in the history of this world. If this history is full of war and horrors, one should turn to a reading in the light of the book of the Apocalypse. This eschatological reading of his own time leads Schilder to an existential emphasis on the classical neo-Calvinist locus of God's revelation in Scripture. The only way to have access to true knowledge of God and his concrete will is in radical submission to Scripture. The existential layer in Schilder's emphasis on well-known neo-Calvinist lines also leads him to advocate a distinctly Reformed spirituality amongst the spiritual revivals of his time. These threads are building blocks for Schilder's ecclesiology as it will develop in the coming years. It is these elements of spirituality, revelation, and *praesentia salutis* that will shape

¹⁶⁰"Als heel de wereld haar programma opstelt, haar vaandels met pakkende leuzen siert, als iedere partij streng-confessioneel gaat worden, en almeer markeert haar eigen standpunt, zou dan de gemeente heil moeten zoeken in onbelijndheid?" "Los van de Kerk V" in: *Gereformeerde Kerkbode. Officieel Orgaan van de Gereformeerde Kerken der Classis Gorinchem*. 7-23 (July 17, 1920).

Schilder's understanding of the nature of the church. For now, Schilder's sparse writings are no more than seeds of that later development. The church, Schilder foresees, will be a small and insignificant minority in a world that is drawing to a close. Opposition will increase, the Beast or the Antichrist will rise against the church. Should that lead her to despair or accommodation? No! It should make her turn to God in a more radical way, in a more concrete way. It should seek obedience and loyalty with renewed strength. It needs to learn to tremble before the Almighty again. The concrete realization of that obedience comes to expression in the themes of the church's confession and unity.

It is worth noting that the concern for 'depth' in Schilder in these early years is quite often closely connected to concerns for the world. The question of history comes from the experience of the war. The anti-christian forces in the world are the smoke that blur the clear knowledge of God. The confession of the church is necessary because the world adorns its banners with contesting confessions. The unity of the church is required especially in the face of the approaching Antichrist. The next section will confirm this even more powerfully when Schilder deals explicitly with art and culture. Schilder's theology is shaped by how he views the world of his time. The connection which the church and Christianity have to the world are of continuous concern.

2.3 Breadth: Culture, Art, and the World

In Gezelle, Schilder recognized depth, in Schaepman breadth. Schaepman was identified by Schilder as the Roman Catholic Kuyper in terms of his cultural and political engagement. Gezelle's portrait had a place in Schilder's study, and depth indeed characterized him more than breadth, especially in Schilder's later developments.¹⁶¹ Like Kuyper, however, it was Schilder's deep conviction that the breadth of the church is inherent to its character as church. The world is the purpose, the church is the means. It is the early Schilder who reveals this aspect more clearly than the later Schilder does. As I will argue, it is not a line that gets lost or loses significance. Schilder considered that the other aspects required more attention. Whether or not he was right in this assessment is another question. But his continuous emphasis on the cultural mandate and the repeated "back to the ABC" of creation easily get lost in all the noise of the polemics over the church. For this period, however, the church was, as we have seen, not a prominent topic. More than the character of the church, Schilder focused on the nature of its engagement with the world. What we

¹⁶¹For Schilder's adoration of Gezelle, see H. Werkman. "Schilder en de literatuur". In: *Geen duimbreed! Facetten van leven en werk van prof. dr. K. Schilder 1890-1952*. Ed. by G. Harinck and J. de Bruijn. Baarn: Ten Have, 1990, pp. 106-130, pp. 113-114.

learn about his position is essential to understanding the later developments, where the church becomes increasingly central. On the surface, it appears as if Schilder has a broad outlook in this first period, engaging with culture and the arts with a great apologetic sensibility that will make place for a narrower approach in subsequent years, even ending in an ecclesial schism where culture, the arts, and apologetics seem remoter than ever. This depiction of Schilder is not only a common perception, it is also reflected in secondary literature.¹⁶² Okke Jager, however, writes that it would be a mistake to disconnect Schilder the artist from the content of his thought.¹⁶³ In line with Jager and Strauss, I will argue that there is a profound unity beneath this shift, albeit without denying the real developments that did indeed take place with regard to, for example, common grace. Schilder the virtuous, sensitive artist and apologist is no other than the tenacious polemicist. It is his theological commitments that connect the two. To understand Schilder's balancing act between the church's faithfulness and its engagement with the world, both the shift in attention and the underlying unity are essential.

2.3.1 The Arts

The first place where the breadth found expression was Schilder's engagement with the arts and his own artistic expression. It was this element that made Schilder's voice stand out among the other Reformed writers of his time. This expressed itself both in his style and in the content of his writings.¹⁶⁴ First, Schilder's style was contemporary: expressionistic, lively, and restless. The notable Reformed minister J.C. de Moor wrote in a review of the collection *Licht in den rook*¹: "A beautiful style, sharp and poetic".¹⁶⁵ His review of Schilder's *Openbaring van Johannes*¹ again lauded his style.¹⁶⁶ He was joined by Schilder's former teacher in Kampen, H. Bouwman, who wrote: "This book exudes a peculiar charm. Gripping is the presentation, beautiful the language."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶²Veldhuizen writes that the artist in Schilder lost to the academic (Veldhuizen, *God en mens onderweg*, p. 339). Kuitert calls the Schilder of the Heidelberg Catechism commentary the inauthentic Schilder (G. Puchinger, *Is de gereformeerde wereld veranderd?* Delft: Meinema, 1966, p. 346). Werkman's article on Schilder and literature is reflective of the author's view of quick degeneration after a promising start (Werkman, "Schilder en de literatuur", p. 130). And, finally, as I already noted, Batteau sees reflected in the early Schilder no more than the consensus of his time (Batteau, "Schilder on the Church", pp. 74-80).

¹⁶³Jager, "Concretiseren tot het uiterste", p. 66. See also Strauss, *Alles of niks*, pp. 62-63.

¹⁶⁴Werkman, "Schilder en de literatuur", pp. 106-109.

¹⁶⁵J.C. de Moor, *De Heraut* no. 2432 (August 31, 1924).

¹⁶⁶J.C. de Moor, *De Heraut* no. 2468 (May 10, 1925).

¹⁶⁷"Daardoor oefent dit boek een eigenaardige bekooring uit. Pakkend is de voorstelling, schoon is de taal". H. Bouwman, *De Bazuin* 73-3 (January 16, 1925).

Second, Schilder was also artistic in the extent to which his oeuvre was imbued with contemporary art, especially literature and poetry. More than any Reformed minister of his time, Schilder followed the literary magazines and read modern novels and poems. His publications reflect this clearly, as his meditations often include sections on literary criticism.¹⁶⁸ Even in his sermons, allusions to contemporary and older poetry appear now and then.¹⁶⁹ This was also how others viewed him. He was included among the contributors of a newly founded Christian literary magazine. His 1927 collection of articles, *Bij dichters en schrijfgeleerden*, was reviewed in *De Heraut* by a literary expert, Hendrika Kuiper-van Oordt, and not by a theologian.¹⁷⁰ Another noteworthy feature is the Art Nouveau artwork that embellishes the covers of his publications (see figure 2.4). Like his engagement with the arts in general, the cover art disappears in the course of the 1920s with the brochure *Een hoornstoot tegen Assen*.¹⁷¹

Schilder's concern for the arts also extended beyond poetry and literature. Schilder himself played the organ and lamented the lack of artistic quality on the part of the organists in his churches. "Who suppresses art, suppresses himself", Schilder writes in 1919. He explicitly decries the "intellectualism" in his churches and the "art-less and often even anti-aesthetic character of our liturgy."¹⁷² His plea for a 'Reformed mysticism' went hand in hand with his plea for Reformed art. They were both part of an anti-intellectualist pursuit. As a minister in Delft, he strongly advocated for the purchase of a high quality organ.¹⁷³ In 1924 Schilder wrote an essay on theatre, where he very uncharacteristically pleads for engagement with theatre in the development of a distinctively Christian theatre.¹⁷⁴ The young pastor was not afraid to tread contested ground: Theatre, like dancing, was commonly perceived as a generally sinful matter. For Schilder, however, his support for the arts was an expression of the Kuiperian ideal of "all terrains for Christ".¹⁷⁵ In applying Kuiper's principle, he went beyond Kuiper, who himself had been more critical of theatre than Schilder was.¹⁷⁶ But here too the artist Schilder warns that "the high esteem for

¹⁶⁸See especially Schilder, *Licht in den rook*!

¹⁶⁹Schilder, *VWPreken I*, pp. 21-23, 43, 147-148, 198.

¹⁷⁰*De Heraut* 2624 (May 6, 1928) and 2625 (May 13, 1928). See Werkman, "Schilder en de literatuur" for an extensive overview and review of Schilder's engagement with literature.

¹⁷¹From that work on, Schilder also switched his publishing house of choice from Meinema in Delft and Holland in Amsterdam to J.H. Kok in Kampen.

¹⁷²Schilder, *VW17-19*, pp. 314-317.

¹⁷³Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, p. 122.

¹⁷⁴K. Schilder. "Onze verhouding tot het toneel". In: *Opgang: Christelijk tijdschrift voor kunst en letteren* 8 (3A 1924), pp. 69-80, p. 74.

¹⁷⁵Schilder, "Onze verhouding tot het toneel", p. 73.

¹⁷⁶Kuiper praised the historical Calvinist rejection of card-playing, theatre, and dancing in his Stone Lectures. Kuiper, *Het Calvinisme*, pp. 63-65 (*ET* Kuiper, *Calvinism*, pp. 93-97).

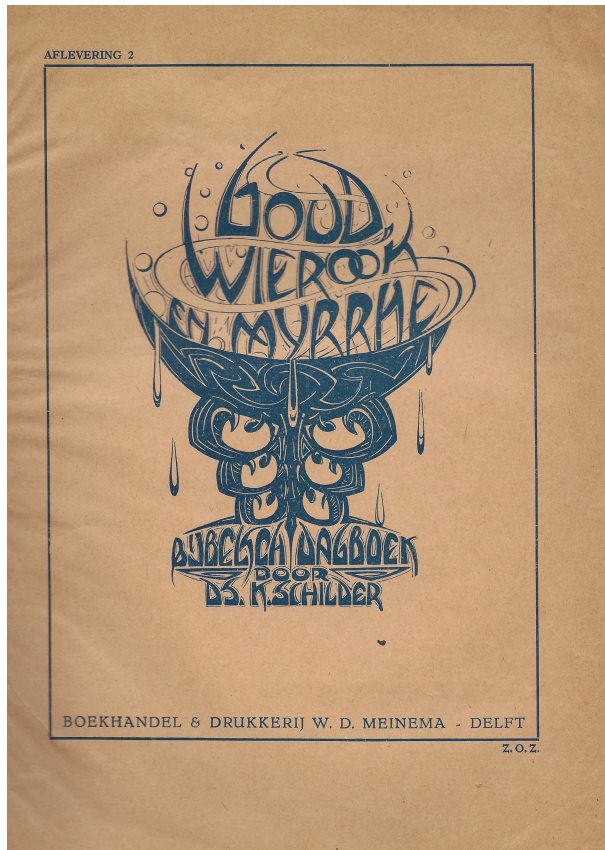


Figure 2.4: Cover of *Goud, wierook en myrrhe* (1926)

art can justify abstinence”, in the case that a certain degree of quality cannot be achieved.¹⁷⁷ If Christians perform art, let them do it properly or not do it at all.

The way Schilder engaged with the arts was critical, towards both Christians and non-Christians. His critique focused on the quality of the art, but even more so on its theological content. In many artistic works, from both past and present, it is ‘Eros’ and not Christ that Schilder sees depicted there. These two, he insists, are each other’s radical opposite. Eros is pagan, natural love. True love is only possible from Christ, and no bridge or connection between them can be made. Christ is the only way to the Father, but Dante’s Beatrice, taken by Schilder as the *pars pro toto* for Eros-art, is not. True art blossoms when it springs from Christ. Echoing Kuyper, Schilder writes that “Calvin-

¹⁷⁷Schilder, “Onze verhouding tot het toneel”, p. 80.

ism, especially by being faithful to itself, has a task and a message, also for the arts".¹⁷⁸ His article, however, sounds more like Barth hammering on the anvil of unique revelation than Kuyper lingering over common grace. This article comes just before the critical turn in Schilder's reading of Barth, and here he quotes approvingly from the *Letter to the Romans*.¹⁷⁹ Some have had the impression that Schilder treats poems and literature as works of dogmatics, and engages with the artists behind them as if they were theologians. Hans Werkman thus criticizes Schilder for expecting from poets a complete doctrine.¹⁸⁰ That is not entirely the case, however. In criticism of Werkman, Jaap Schaeffer writes that Schilder "expects a clear insight in the religious theme the writer treats, not an orthodox doctrine."¹⁸¹ Schaeffer is right to nuance Werkman's criticism, since Schilder demanded that the poet truly wrestle with his topic, seeing it for what it is. This fits better in Schilder's appreciation for the work of such Roman Catholics as Guido Gezelle and Robert Benson (1871-1914). On the doctrinal level Schilder surely did not agree with them, but he does quote them regularly and approvingly.¹⁸² On the other hand, as with mysticism, Schilder does indeed believe that doctrine, the confession, should be the source and foundation for faith, the arts, and spirituality. Of course, the poet is not required to produce doctrine but poems, a genre that has its own rules and purpose, its own 'sphere sovereignty'. That attitude is clear in how Schilder is equally critical of Calvinist poets and his church, where artistic sensibility is so often lacking.¹⁸³ For now, we can conclude that Schilder exemplifies the critical engagement with the arts he demands from his readers. Art is a vital element of the Christian life, but it needs to be approached from Christian, that is, Calvinistic principles. No breadth without depth. No engagement without faithfulness.

2.3.2 Church Language

Aside from art, another part of Schilder's sensitivity to the church's relationship with the world was church language. One of his books from this time attacked

¹⁷⁸"Het calvinisme heeft, juist door zich zoo getrouw mogelijk te blijven, een taak en een richtwoord ook voor de kunst" (K. Schilder. "Eros of Christus". In: C. Tazelaar and M. J. Leendertse. *Christelijk Letterkundige Studiën II*. Amsterdam: Holland, 1926, p. 215). See Kuyper's fifth Stone Lecture "Calvinism and Art". Kuyper, *Het Calvinisme*, pp. 127-155 (*ET* Kuyper, *Calvinism*, pp. 189-230).

¹⁷⁹Schilder, "Eros of Christus", pp. 214-15.

¹⁸⁰Werkman, "Schilder en de literatuur", pp. 119-121.

¹⁸¹Schaeffer, "Schilder mysticus", p. 217.

¹⁸²See also the quotes from "Aesthetische Christusbeschouwing" in section 2.2.3, where Schilder cites Nietzsche approvingly and agrees with 'the artist' in general for demanding a place at the table.

¹⁸³See the quote from the article "Aesthetische Christusbeschouwing" in Schilder, *OWK IV*, p. 142 we provided above under 2.2.3.

the antiquated church language and the bad quality of the rhymed psalms that were sung in worship services.¹⁸⁴ Schilder pleaded for a modernization of church language, as he himself exemplified it, insisting that the gospel had to be voiced in the language of the era.¹⁸⁵ That was an essential and difficult part of the Christian freedom. The tone of voice is, again, apologetic. Schilder, like a Schleiermacher, seeks to heed the “Gebildeten unter Ihnen [die Religion] Verächters”, the complaints of Multatuli and many other contemporaries about church language.¹⁸⁶ And Schilder takes their side: “When the gulf between the spiritual life without and within the church becomes greater than it already is now, we fear that the nearly canonical saying that the church is no more than ‘a drop of oil on the water’ is true for the politician, the academic, and the economist, but not for the artist.”¹⁸⁷ As Werkman and Schaeffer both note, *Christ in his Suffering* is the clearest example of how Schilder himself set the example for a spirituality voiced in the language of his time. Werkman characterizes his language as expressionistic with brief sentences, implicit, and evocative.¹⁸⁸ This is also why reading Schilder today is so difficult, even for native speakers, considerably more difficult than reading many of his contemporaries and even predecessors like Kuyper or Bavinck. Schilder’s Dutch was very contemporary and, because language is subject to continuous change, has become more outdated compared to those whose writings were less fashionable at the time. Schilder wanted to renew the language of the church with clear apologetic motivation, and he himself exemplified this renewal in his style. The church had to be “in rapport met den tijd”, in sync with modern times; if that is “*neocalvinism*”, Schilder comments, “so be it.”¹⁸⁹

2.3.3 Christ and Culture

Schilder argues for and exemplifies engagement with modern culture. Schilder saw himself as continuing in the line of Kuyper and Bavinck, while also wishing to take their intentions in new directions. As we will continue to see below, the conversation and engagement with modern culture lies at the heart of Schilder’s

¹⁸⁴K. Schilder. *Kerktaal en leven*. Amsterdam: Holland, 1923.

¹⁸⁵Schilder, *VW17-19*, p. 314.

¹⁸⁶Schilder, *Kerktaal en leven*, pp. 9-12, 56-57.

¹⁸⁷“Want indien de afstand tusschen het geestesleven buiten en in de kerk nòg grooter wordt, dan hij nu reeds al te vaak is, [...] dan staat te vreezen, dat het welhaast gecanoniseerde gezegde, dat de kerk ‘geen oliedrop op de wateren is’ wel voor den man der politiek, der wetenschap, der economie, maar niet voor den man der kunst schijnt bedoeld te zijn.” (Schilder, *Kerktaal en leven*, p. 156).

¹⁸⁸Werkman, “Schilder en de literatuur”, pp. 121-130 and Schaeffer, “Schilder mysticus”, pp. 221-222.

¹⁸⁹Schilder, *Kerktaal en leven*, p. 152.

critique: The church needs to engage more with the world, is his message. In this sense Schilder continues a key Kuyperian motive, namely to culturally emancipate the often pietistically colored orthodoxy of his time. His motives are clearly missional in nature: The church needs to be in sync with modern culture. Schilder did not fear to radicalize Kuyper's intentions, as we will see at greater length below. Schilder's attempt at continuing Kuyper's quest would set him at odds with his forebears. The key neo-Calvinist rationale for this engagement was common grace (see section 1.1). God's grace is not only particular in church, faith, and the Bible, Kuyper had argued, but also common, in society, among unbelievers. This idea provided Kuyper with the tools to stick to the orthodox Reformed confessions and beliefs in departure from his liberal teachers, while at the same time exerting all possible efforts to emancipate Reformed orthodoxy from the confines of the church. With Kuyper Reformed orthodoxy had a newspaper, schools, university, and political party.

In doing so, Kuyper was among the first to embrace the distinction between Christianity and culture. This was especially clear in how he argued for a Christian political party and for Christian schools. Many of his *Hervormde* contemporaries, while sympathetic to his theological orthodoxy and activism, could not follow Kuyper on this point for their theocratic sympathies. The distinction, however, would become increasingly sharp after the war: There now was, clearer than ever, a 'world' and a 'church'. As Harinck has demonstrated on several occasions, around the Great War Christianity and culture for the first time explicitly became separate entities in the Dutch context. He points, for example, to several works where 'Christianity' and 'culture' had become distinct. Their connection was no longer a given, it had become a project.¹⁹⁰ This would turn into one of the foremost theological problems of the century, in *gereformeerde* circles, as we saw in the opening statement of *De Reformatie* (section 2.1.4), but also in all of Western Christianity.

What is the early Schilder's position in these developments, and how does his emphasis on engagement with the arts fit into the neo-Calvinist heritage?

The early Schilder's understanding of the relationship between Christ and culture has been treated by others, especially in the light of the vehement critique he later voiced against his own Kuyperian heritage on this point of common grace. They remark that in this first period of his professional life, Schilder's ideas remain undeveloped and are still predominantly determined by the Kuyperian view. This becomes apparent in how he revises texts from this period for later editions. For example, Sander Griffioen notes that in the first two editions

¹⁹⁰G. Harinck. "‘De kleine vrucht van zeer groote verwachting’ Nederlandse protestantse kerken en hun pogingen de samenleving aan te spreken over de Eerste Wereldoorlog". In: *Trajecta* 23 (2014), pp. 291–314, pp. 294–295.

of *De Openbaring van Johannes en het sociale leven* (1924 and 1925), Schilder still quotes from Kuyper's *Common Grace* in a positive sense, affirming that "common grace serves particular grace" and that there is a "permanent gain" in today's cultural developments.¹⁹¹ In the third edition of 1951, however, Schilder omitted this quote and only cites Kuyper for the purpose of criticizing him.¹⁹² Worth noting is also how Schilder in the same book, like Kuyper, quotes Revelation 21:24-26 to argue that the cultural achievements of this world will not perish.¹⁹³ Ten years later, Schilder explicitly attacks this exegesis of Kuyper.¹⁹⁴ Jochem Douma makes an identical observation about Schilder's development with regard to common grace. Only from *Christ in his Suffering* (1930) onwards does Schilder's departure from a Kuyperian view of culture start to take shape, while he simply follows Kuyper before that time.¹⁹⁵ This development can also be illustrated with the successive editions of *Wat is de Hel?* In the first edition of 1919, Schilder notes how the Christian understanding of hell is present in other religions as well. He then remarks that "we can but rejoice" in this. In the second edition of 1932, he makes a small alteration which entirely changes the sense into that of an ironic rhetorical question: "Are we now to rejoice [in this]?"¹⁹⁶ Indeed, Schilder presumes the concept of common grace as a means to assume a positive attitude towards culture. God's work of grace pertains not only to the church, but can be found in wider culture. The adherence to this Kuyperian doctrine implies a positive attitude towards that culture. In addition to the examples we saw in the previous section, we see Schilder, in 1920, refer to the Indian poet Tagore as "one of the best disciples in the school of common grace".¹⁹⁷ At several other instances Schilder speaks of common grace positively. Indeed, he shows an "unprejudiced adherence to the doctrine of common grace."¹⁹⁸

This reading of Schilder, however, needs nuancing. The future critique that I have already mentioned several times is lurking beneath the surface. An example

¹⁹¹Schilder, *Openbaring van Johannes*¹, p. 209. Schilder refers here to Kuyper, *Gemeene gratie I*, pp. 458-466 (ET Kuyper, *Common Grace I*, p. 543).

¹⁹²K. Schilder. *De openbaring van Johannes en het sociale leven*. 3rd ed. Delft: Meinema, 1951, p. 313 and Griffioen, "De cultuurfilosofie in de openbaring van Johannes en het sociale leven", pp. 45-46.

¹⁹³Schilder, *Openbaring van Johannes*¹, p. 39.

¹⁹⁴K. Schilder. *Wat is de hemel?*¹. 1st ed. Kampen: Kok, 1935, p. 284.

¹⁹⁵Douma, *Algemene genade*, pp. 185-188 (ET Douma, *Common Grace*, pp. 211-214).

¹⁹⁶"Wij kunnen ons niet anders dan verblijden" (Schilder, *Wat is de hel?*¹, p. 60) becomes "Moeten wij ons nu verblijden?" (K. Schilder. *Wat is de hel?* 3rd ed. Kampen: Kok, 1932, p. 160).

¹⁹⁷Schilder, *OWK II*, p. 208.

¹⁹⁸Douma, *Algemene genade*, p. 186 (ET Douma, *Common Grace*, p. 211). Oosterhoff's translation here is inaccurate. 'Onbevangen' does not translate as 'open-minded', but rather as 'unprejudiced'.

is a sermon held by Schilder in September 1918, a few weeks after the end of the war. Schilder opens with the words: “This morning your attention is drawn to a *forgotten doctrine*: the *doctrine of common disgrace, common judgment*.”¹⁹⁹ The ironic reference to the doctrine of common grace is hard to miss. In the rest of the sermon Schilder does not use the term again, as if he only wants to make a subtle allusion rather than an open critique. His point, however, is clear: Rather than common grace, the recent historical developments give evidence of a common judgment of God. And that is also what Scripture teaches us, namely that the judgment of God begins at God’s house and ends in the world. Is it a coincidence that Schilder describes the judgment of God in precisely the same way as Kuyper speaks of the grace of God? It begins at the house of God (particular grace) and from there it radiates into the world (common grace).²⁰⁰

As I demonstrated in the previous section, Schilder’s attention in this first decade is drawn to the problem of God and history in the light of the war, leading him to an eschatological reading of history. Like Kuyper in the last great work he wrote after the war, *Van de Voleinding*, Schilder’s tone is apocalyptic, existential, dark. The Word of God needs to be heard, even if it is heavy, Schilder writes in *Openbaring van Johannes*¹. When the apostle John swallows the book in Revelation 10, his stomach becomes bitter. “Bitter”, Schilder repeats, and ends his book there.²⁰¹

Schilder’s central book on the topic of Christ and culture is *De openbaring van Johannes en het sociale leven*, which I have also discussed above (section 2.2.1). In line with my observations on Schilder’s reluctance with regard to common grace, this book provides a meagre cultural program. Schilder indeed adheres to Kuyper’s notion of cultural activity, but the gist of the book points in another direction. Far from any sort of optimistic account of how Christendom has made Europe flourish, as such can indeed be found in Kuyper, Schilder rather sketches “the great boycott”. This is his way of referring to what he expects to happen: the world, the Antichrist, will assemble against the church. The ideal of community and utopia will not be realized in Marxism or any other ideology. The struggle of the classes is not a struggle to worry about. No, the real struggle is between Christ and Anti-christ. There and only there will the world gather in united communion: against Christ.²⁰² Eschatology dominates Schilder’s view

¹⁹⁹“Vanmorgen wordt uw aandacht gevraagd voor een *vergeten leerstuk*: het leerstuk van de *algemene ongenade, het algemene oordeel* (Schilder, *VWPreken I*, p. 179).

²⁰⁰A. Kuyper. *De gemeene gratie. Tweede deel. Het leerstellig gedeelte*. 4th ed. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1902, pp. 268-275(ETA. Kuyper. *Common Grace: God’s Gifts for a Fallen World. Volume 2*. Ed. by J. J. Ballor and S. J. Grabill. Trans. by N. D. Kloosterman and E. M. van der Maas. Lexham Press, 2019).

²⁰¹Schilder, *Openbaring van Johannes*¹, p. 245.

²⁰²Schilder, *Openbaring van Johannes*¹, pp. 168-188.

on history, as well as his view on culture. However, when Schilder in the last chapter asks whether Christians should retreat from the world, the answer is a firm 'no'. The image he sketches, however, is not that of cultural construction, but of preaching against the tide and eventual defeat: "The place where they have fallen proves that to the very last moment their struggle sought the center of the world and not a position of remoteness."²⁰³ The church should seek the "*broad street of the great city*", Schilder translates Rev. 11:8.²⁰⁴ For the world, even when it is about to perish in the battle of the last days, remains God's world. We should not expect great cultural achievements, but the church must remain loyal in every domain of life. It must be even more loyal than it was before, since it will be 'all or nothing' in the apocalypse. Even if it means that the church will draw her last breath, it should do so on the street of the big city. For it is God's city.

The Revelation of John and Social Life is at least one great argument from silence when it comes to common grace. In Schilder's major monograph on the position of the Christian towards socialism, common grace is virtually absent, even while the Kuyperian claim to engage with all of life is omnipresent. When Schilder in the last chapter affirms the enduring necessity of cultural engagement, he points to the fact that we are God's co-workers: "That human beings have a vocation for the entire cosmos."²⁰⁵ Schilder's replacement of common grace with the common mandate, as he will develop it in the 1930s, is clearly anticipated in this early period.

This nuance of Schilder's "unprejudiced adherence" to common grace is more than an effort to force consistency upon Schilder with a few quotes. As I noted above, Schilder's emphasis in general is on theology from faith, rather than from experience. This is a thread that runs throughout his early writings. Above it returned with regard to God and history, to revelation and to the church. Kuyper's universal starting point has, already in this early period, been replaced with a starting point in the particular category of faith. Schilder's view on Christ and culture is strongly marked by his Kuyperian heritage, and is indeed as yet undeveloped. Nonetheless, his views mark a clear shift towards his own characteristic emphases. The world is understood in eschatological terms, which entails an urgent call to radical conversion to God. While Schilder does not explicitly abandon the idea of common grace, the focus is now on God's common wrath and on the individual's vocation. Schilder's turn from the

²⁰³"Zoo bewijst de plek, waar ze gevallen zijn, dat hun strijd tot het laatste moment toe gezocht heeft het centrum van het wereldleven en niet de achteraf-positie." (Schilder, *Openbaring van Johannes*¹, p. 242).

²⁰⁴"de breede straat der groote stad." (Schilder, *Openbaring van Johannes*¹, pp. 241-242).

²⁰⁵"[...] dat er een roeping ligt tegenover heel den kosmos op dien mensch." Schilder, *Openbaring van Johannes*¹, p. 238.

universal to the particular has its roots in the post-war climate.

2.3.4 Conclusion

Not only was Schilder's pursuit of renewal focused on 'the depth', it was also invested in the 'breadth'. It was this aspect that drew more attention and made Schilder stand out among his contemporaries. His literary and poetic sensitivity, in particular, as well as his advocacy of increased engagement on that point, attracted attention. The underpinnings for this engagement were cast in Kuyperian terms of common grace and the slogan "all terrains for Christ". Schilder understood himself to be continuing and deepening that tradition. I have argued that the later developments with regard to common grace are already visible here in incipient form. This is important to note because it shows that for Schilder, the cultural engagement of his younger years were not part of a naive acceptance of prevailing views he later abandoned. The seeds for his later criticism are already clearly present in this first period. His cultural engagement is not a question of naivety, but is marked by the same critical and antithetical view that will come to dominance later on. This supports one of the central claims of this study, that for Schilder the robust nature of the church is as equally important as its engagement with the world. There is not an early Schilder of cultural engagement and a later Schilder of ecclesial absolutism. For Schilder, they are two sides of the same coin. This combination lies at the heart of his ecclesiology, as we will see in the later chapters.

One question still begs for an answer. If it is true, as I argue, that Schilder's oeuvre is characterized by a strong unity, why is it that he does not pay as much attention to the church in this period? Part of the answer will be provided in the next chapter, when I will detail why this concern was sparked by the synod of Assen in 1926 and the encounter with Barth around that same time. Another part of the answer is simply that this period is characterized by a wide array of different topics with which Schilder deals. There is simply not one that stands out in particular, as will be come to be the case in later years. In that sense, the subsequent chapters may give the impression that Schilder will talk about nothing but the church from the next period onwards, but that is far from true. His journalistic work was dominated by ecclesial polemics, but few of his books are about the church. His dissertation was about revelation,²⁰⁶ his trilogy about Christology,²⁰⁷ his *What is Heaven?* a theology of history,²⁰⁸ his dogmatics lectures about the doctrine of God. The real characteristic of this first period is Schilder's engagement with the arts. That faded because he believed

²⁰⁶Schilder, *Zur Begriffsgeschichte des Paradoxon*.

²⁰⁷Schilder, *Christus in zijn lijden I*¹.

²⁰⁸Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹.

that the polemics with Karl Barth became more important, and accordingly devoted much of his time to it.

2.4 Theological Conclusion

In this final section, I will seek to draw a theological conclusion from the chapter. Historical considerations will be left out as much as possible, and I will focus rather on the building blocks that will be of aid to answer the central question of this study: *How does Klaas Schilder conceive of the church as both distinct from and engaged with the world?* I will do the same at the end of every chapter. For this chapter, we will have to be content with only a few rough sketches.

First, we have learned that the notion of the *praesentia salutis* is a central concern for Schilder and that this concern finds its roots in the crisis of the Great War. The experience of God's absence has led Schilder to emphasize the necessity of speaking of his presence. To do this Schilder, like many of his contemporaries, used an eschatological framework which allowed him to speak of God's presence in judgment and in the horrors of the war. God's profound connection with history is essential for Schilder. This experience of God's absence also puts Schilder on the track of exchanging the universal for the particular. In line with Barth's response to the war, Schilder takes faith as the sole starting point for knowledge of God. This motif returns in his view on history, revelation, spirituality, and the church. It is also with regard to the arts that Schilder radically reasons from faith. Unlike Barth, however, there is a real presence of salvation: Scripture is God's reliable Word, humanly formed doctrines are the object of 'true mysticism'. God is present with his judgment in the trenches of the Great War. God can only be known by faith, but this knowledge is tangible and concrete nonetheless. The church too is part of Schilder's understanding of the presence of salvation: Weak and insignificant, but still the church of God at the end times.

Second, as to the nature of the church, the picture that surfaces is that of a small and weak minority in a hostile world. Church unity and the confession are important markers. Characteristic is Schilder's critical ecclesiology: The church is a place of testing, of critical tension, of 'all or nothing'. The church should be characterized by a permanent pursuit of obedience. This is an impetus not so much to perfection, but towards authenticity and away from complacency. Here the dynamic aspect of the church is anticipated. Christ as the head of the church is a demand for permanent conversion, he is a living head.

Thirdly, we learn that for Schilder spirituality is a core concern that is not opposed to attention for the church, but rather a part of it. Without the articles written by the early Schilder, this element is readily missed, and the later Schilder

can be easily mistaken for a rationalist and objectivist who only pays attention to the outward realities of church and covenant. For Schilder, the church is a mystical and existential reality.

Fourthly, we gain a basic understanding of how Schilder understands the world. Among the different layers of meaning, the emphasis clearly falls on the world as the hostile, anti-christian context of the church and the Christian faith. His eschatological reading of his time makes the antithesis an important motif. The Christian should not seclude himself in the church. Schilder continues in the line of Kuyper's project to emancipate the Christian. Schilder himself exemplifies such engagement in promoting Christian theatre, in encouraging art in the church, in engaging with contemporary art himself. His argument clearly favors a distinctly Reformed art and poetry. While Schilder can appreciate the beauty of non-christian art based on common grace, this is not his aim. In distinction from Kuyper, however, Schilder combined this cultural engagement with an apocalyptic and meagre cultural program that was based on the book of Revelation. The conquering of the world takes places in the context of the desert and persecution of Revelation 12. Via another route, however, the world comes back into the picture. Here the world is not so much the realm of the Antichrist, nor the subject of Christian conquering, but it is the place where God's history unravels. I noted how striking it is that Schilder is highly sensitive to the developments of world history and integrates that aspect in his theology. This reading of the world is guided by Scripture, but the history of the world is the realization of God's plan. In regard to the arts as well, we saw that Schilder learned from the world, from its poets, its musicians, and from its critique on language in the church.

Turning to the church: 1926-1934

The previous chapter described a period of beginnings when it comes to Schilder's ideas, especially on the church. In the present chapter, which covers the period from 1926 to 1934, we will work towards a clearer view on what Schilder wanted and how he understood the church in relationship to the world. Rather than new ideas, this period shows a development of strands that were already present in the first period. If we build on the house metaphor we evoked in chapter one, we could say that the first period provides us with an artist's impression of what the house should look like. This second period now provides us with a clear framework: foundations, walls, and a roof. We will have to await the next period for the doors, windows, flooring, paintwork, and furniture. As noted, this image has been chosen for the continuity of which it is suggestive. Schilder's thought is indeed characterized by continuity, as the following will show. Yet this is not to deny that there were certain elements that changed and developed.

This chapter is entitled 'Turning to the church', as an obvious allusion to the first chapter where we set the stage with the ecclesial turn in contemporary theology. Schilder's turn is, of course, different, but in two ways it is a turn nonetheless. Most importantly, it is a turn in the sense that Schilder increasingly emphasizes the centrality of the church within the framework of his neo-Calvinist tradition. The future of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, the future of Bavinck's and Kuyper's legacy, lies in a firm theology of the church, was Schilder's deep conviction. Much of Schilder's corrections and polemics pivot around ecclesiology and revelation, which find their unity in what I noted earlier, namely the *praesentia salutis*. The depth that Schilder sought to bring, as we described his position in the previous chapter, required a deepening of the ecclesiology of his tradition. And even the breadth, which remained a prime concern for Schilder, could only be found in a faithful church. Or, to put it in Schilder's

words, the church is the hearth of the cultural mandate, echoing Kuyper's image of the house of particular grace that radiates its beams of common grace through the windows and out into the world.¹ Secondly, the turn is a shift in Schilder's attention. As I have noted, Schilder initially had no particular concern for the heated discussions concerning the pluriformity of the church. That is about to change. The turn is clearly visible in the way Schilder loses his earlier interest in contemporary literature and poetry. At the surface, Schilder may seem to exchange a broad concern for culture and the arts for a narrow concern for the church. I will argue that it is, on the contrary, precisely Schilder's broad concern that is responsible for his 'ecclesial turn'. The turn is a contextual one: The present age needs a robust church in order not to lose the cultural mandate. The shift is also visible in how eschatology becomes less prominent, not because Schilder changes his convictions, but because the renewed context demanded another emphasis.

3.1 Preliminaries

Before I turn to Schilder's views on the church and its relationship to the world, there are a number of things that need to be addressed. I will first describe the biographical and historical background of the period under discussion. Then I will zoom in on a central aspect of that background, namely the synod of Assen and Schilder's encounter with Karl Barth.²

3.1.1 Background and Biography

In this section I will briefly sketch the biographical and wider historical background to this period of Schilder's life. In October 1925, Schilder moved from the midsize town of Delft to the village of Oegstgeest. As a pastor of a small congregation he hoped to find more time for the study that had proved so difficult in Delft. The proximity of the Leiden University library made this post even more attractive to Schilder. But the expectation of a relieved agenda proved a disappointment. Even though the Oegstgeest congregation was small, difficulties and tensions abounded, demanding much of Schilder's energy and time.³ Furthermore, the *Gereformeerde Kerken* were passing through an intense crisis surrounding the Amsterdam pastor Jan Geelkerken (1879-1960). This crisis was caused by a complaint that one of Geelkerken's parishioners had lodged against a sermon in which he was alleged to have said that the serpent had

¹Kuyper, *Gemeene gratie II*, pp. 268-275 (*ET Kuyper, Common Grace 2*).

²For synod of Assen and the subsequent schism see glossary and chart (A.1).

³Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, pp. 138-144.

not really spoken in the Garden of Eden. This case led to a debate of epic proportions, and became a symbol for the tensions between the progressive and conservative voices in the churches, culminating in the special synod of Assen in 1926.⁴ Schilder tried to lift the Geelkerken case from the progressive-conservative debate, and wanted to show that the decision of the synod of Assen was not a verdict for the ‘renewers’.⁵ The columns of the weekly *Persschouw*⁶ and *De Reformatie* during this time, as well as Schilder’s involvement in the Leiden student community, are revealing of this striving.⁷ For Schilder, the Assen controversy proved extremely time-consuming and his engagement was quite intensive.⁸ If anything, it was this that occupied Schilder during these years. It was also during this time that Schilder met Karl Barth in person and discussed the synod of Assen.⁹

The disappointing struggles he experienced in Oegstgeest led Schilder to accept the call from the church of Delfshaven in Rotterdam as early as June 1928. The church of Delfshaven was one of the bigger churches in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, with over 8,000 members. Schilder became one of four ministers to this congregation.¹⁰ His pastorate in Delfshaven, which would last until 1933, was interrupted by two intensive year-long study leaves at the University of Erlangen from April 1930 to March 1931 and from March 1932 to March 1933 in order to obtain his doctoral degree. It was the imminent retirement

⁴M. J. Aalders. *Heeft de slang gesproken?: het strijdbare leven van dr. J. G. Geelkerken (1879-1960)*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2013, pp. 241-295 and Endedijk, *De Gereformeerde Kerken 1*, pp. 192-205.

⁵In the previous chapter (section 2.1.4), I described the youth movement in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* that was initially associated with the *De Reformatie* and the *Gereformeerde Studenten Beweging* (Reformed Student Movement). This was never a uniform movement, however, and even its association with the *De Reformatie* was not uncontested, as many participants of the first hour soon left the periodical. Jan Geelkerken and Johannes Brussaard participated in the founding meetings but never joined, while Frederik Buitendijk and Hendrik Van der Vaart Smit were part of the initial cooperators but left within a couple of years. Schilder was also considered a renewer and active in the *De Reformatie*. Harinck, *De Reformatie*, pp. 38-111 The synod of Assen would alienate an important part of the initial youth movement.

⁶The *Persschouw* (litt. press spectator) was a weekly returning feature of *De Reformatie* in which quotes from other newspapers and journals were printed and supplied with brief comment. Schilder was editor of the *Persschouw* from 1925 onwards.

⁷G. Harinck. “De donderwolk van Oegstgeest. Over K. Schilder en het gereformeerde studentenleven te Leiden”. In: *Woordbestaan: lustrumbundel van de Vereniging van Gereformeerde Studenten te Leiden Franciscus Gomarus, ter gelegenheid van haar zesde lustrum 1957-1987*. 1987, pp. 14-30.

⁸See the brochure K. Schilder. *Een hoornstoot tegen Assen?: (antwoord op een conscientiekeret)*. Kampen: Kok, 1928 as well as the nearly permanent polemics in *De Reformatie* during these years.

⁹“De bliksemafliders van het schisma” in: *De Reformatie* 8-19, p. 148 (February 10, 1928).

¹⁰Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, pp. 165-178.

of the professor of Dogmatics at the Kampen School, A.G. Honig, and the fact that many looked to Schilder as his successor, that increased the pressure on Schilder to complete the degree with some haste because it was needed for him to be eligible for the professorate. The Free University would have been a logical option, since the Kampen School had not yet been accorded the right to grant doctoral degrees. Schilder's colleague in *De Reformatie*, Valentijn Hepp, would then have become his supervisor. But this idea was abandoned when Hepp insisted that Schilder complete all the undergraduate courses in dogmatics prior to admission as a doctoral student. Schilder then looked abroad and ended up at the philosophical faculty of the Lutheran University of Erlangen. Although this may seem like a surprising decision, the choice for philosophy and for a German university was not unprecedented in *Gereformeerde* circles.¹¹ For Schilder, Erlangen made sense because he was personally acquainted with Wilhelm Koller, a high school teacher from Erlangen. Schilder's supervisor was Eugen Herrigel, a neo-Kantian philosopher particularly renowned as a specialist of zen-Buddhism, a field that enjoyed considerable popularity at the time. It was Herrigel who suggested the theme of the paradox, having read Schilder's publications. That would indeed become the topic of his dissertation, which was completed in March 1933 and awarded the highest grade.¹² Herrigel would later say about Schilder that he was "my best and most mature student, a man with a pure and fine soul."¹³ In the light of Schilder's subsequent opposition to national-socialist ideology, it is noteworthy that Schilder was a student at the most 'brown' university in Germany. Hitler himself visited the university in 1930 and praised it for its stance. It is surprising that Schilder remained completely silent on the issue during that time. George Harinck suggests that this betrays both Schilder's 'all or nothing'-mentality, where the rise of national socialism was just another expression of the anti-christian forces in the world, as well as his strong Dutch focus.¹⁴ Not long after Schilder came back, in August 1933, the appointment that everyone had expected was realized by the Synod of Middelburg. In January 1934 Schilder's inauguration as professor of Dogmatics at the Theological School in Kampen took place, whereby he took up the chair

¹¹Schilder's colleague Douwe Wielenga (1896-1972) obtained his Ph.D. in philosophy from Erlangen in 1921. His uncle Bastiaan Wielenga (1873-1949) and the Kampen professor Tjeerd Hoekstra (1880-1936) both took doctorates in philosophy from Heidelberg University (resp. 1899 and 1906).

¹²Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, pp. 209-221, complemented by G. Harinck. "Een bleke werkelijkheid". In: *Alles of niets: Opstellen over K. Schilder*. Ed. by G. Harinck. AD Chartasreeks 6. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2003, pp. 79-126, pp. 96-97, who found evidence for a meeting between Koller and Schilder in 1928.

¹³"Meinen besten und reifsten Schüler, ein Mann von reiner und feiner Seele" (Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, p. 219).

¹⁴Harinck, "Een bleke werkelijkheid", pp. 79-126.

once occupied by Bavinck.

Nationally, this period was characterized by the Great Depression that held the United States and Europe in its grip after the Wall Street crash in 1929. Especially in the Netherlands, this crisis lasted long and caused considerable poverty and high unemployment that lasted until after the Second World War. The depth of the crisis is commonly perceived as one of the causes for the strong rise of national socialism in Germany. In the Netherlands, this also occurred, even though the national-socialist party there did remain a minority. The crisis continued to fuel the rise of ideologies throughout Europe, and extended the climate of crisis and tension.¹⁵ This milieu was reflected in broader culture, to which the *Gereformeerde Kerken* were no exception. Schilder's theology of tension and 'all or nothing' fit this climate and made his star rise to greater fame. More than in the previous period, Schilder now became a fierce polemicist. This was also a broader cultural phenomenon. Literary historian Jacqueline Bell writes about the 1930s: "The cultural climate of the Low Countries was characterized by writers who attacked each other in polemics."¹⁶ Famous are the polemical writings of Menno ter Braak and Eduard du Perron in the literary magazine *Forum* in 1932.¹⁷ This alienated many, but also had a great appeal. For now we can note it fit the tense climate of crisis of the early thirties. Furthermore, this increasing crisis forms the backdrop to Schilder's 'ecclesial turn'. As we will see, Schilder continues to refer to the unrest and turmoil of his time, particularly when he addresses the necessity of a robust church. It is no coincidence that Schilder's attention for the arts and literature coincides with a time of lower tension and increased optimism: the twenties. Schilder's growing attention for the church comes with the economical crisis, and with the rise of fascism and national socialism. As an example, one might consider the lines he wrote during his second study leave in Erlangen in 1932, where red banners with black swastikas adorned the university walls.

Why do you seek shelter in the dark, o CHURCH? Why are you led to believe by humanists and sectarians that the church can be a small club in the slums of the world, neither human nor broad? [...] In this she wins the entire world, the entire league of nations, the entire mass of modern pagans and apostles of peace, church-destroyers and blasé people. They all talk about their new

¹⁵L. de Jong. *Het koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Deel I: Voorspel.* 's Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969, pp. 142-143, 159-161, 290-291.

¹⁶Bel, *Bloed en Rozen*, p. 648.

¹⁷G. Puchinger. *Ontmoetingen met Schilder: prof. dr. K. Schilder, 1890 - 19 december - 1990.* Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1990, pp. 28, 33 who also notes the parallel between Du Perron and ter Braak on the one hand and Schilder on the other. For the polemics in *Forum*, see Bel, *Bloed en Rozen*, pp. 648-674.



Figure 3.1: The Berlin Sportpalast during a national-socialist rally in 1930 (Bundesarchiv Koblenz, 102-10391, Georg Pahl)

gathering, and create one every day. But they laugh at the problem tabled by those who cannot see a gathering, where [people] do not gather in God-in-Christ, in God-Yahweh.¹⁸

Schilder thus positions the church as a counter-gathering to the various gatherings that were being held throughout the world: Ecumenical gatherings (of which Schilder was critical), political rallies of communists, fascists, and national socialists (see figure 3.1), and the League of Nations.¹⁹ The church is presented by Schilder as an ‘alternative polis’, to use Hauerwas’s terms. The church must not be the world.

¹⁸Wat schuilt gij dan in het donker weg, gij KERK? Wat laat ge u door humanisten en sectariërs wijsmaken, dat de kerk een clubje wezen kan, een ding in het wereldslop, zo helemaal niet menselijk, of humaan, zo helemaal niet brééd? [...] *Daarin* verwint zij heel de wereld, heel den volkenbond, en heel de massa van moderne heidenen en vredesapostelen, en kerkverwoesters, en geblaseerde lieden. Zij praten allen over hun nieuwsten coetus, en máken er dagelijks een, maar lachen om de probleemstelling van wie geen *coetus* ZIEN kan, waar niet uit God-in-Christus, God-Jahwe, *vergaderd* werd, *gecongregeerd* (K. Schilder. *De Kerk*. Ed. by J. Kamphuis. Vol. 1. Verzamelde werken III. Nijkerk: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1960, p. 160).

¹⁹The League of Nations was commonly perceived by many *Gereformeerden* as an anti-christian force for its tendency to unite the nations of the world, seeing in it the “fornication” of “all nations” in Revelation 18:3. Not all shared this view, however; see, e.g., H. Bijleveld, “De Volkenbond V. (slot)” in: *De Reformatie* 12-25, p. 193 (March 18, 1932), who endorses the League of Nations with a reference to common grace.

3.1.2 1926: Barth and the Synod of Assen

In this section, I want to lift out one event from this period in particular: the synod of Assen as it coincided with Schilder's encounter with Karl Barth. As Jaap Kamphuis has pointed out: "The battle against dialectical theology and its presuppositions [...] were in line with his [Schilder's] position in 1926."²⁰ Indeed, Assen 1926 and Schilder's reception of Karl Barth are inseparable. For our inquiry into Schilder's understanding of the relationship between the church and the world this is important, since it is where the emphasis on the *praesentia salutis*, whose roots we found in the first period, become the heart of Schilder's thought. Schilder's emphasis on the church is a direct consequence of the theological directions he took around the synod of Assen, in opposition to Barth. The concern for the concrete presence of God's salvation on this earth, in history, was already a dominant trait in the early Schilder, as the previous chapter has shown. In this second period, the coinciding of the synod of Assen and Schilder's encounter with Barth deepened this concern. Schilder's 'ecclesial turn' happens at the same time, and there is a reason for this. The church was, in Schilder's view, the place where the concrete historical expression of God's salvific presence was realized – not in a sacramental way, but through the presence of the living Word. This section helps us to understand why Schilder makes this turn to the church both historically and theologically.

The relationship between Schilder and Barth is also important in light of the conversation with Stanley Hauerwas that circumscribes our research. Karl Barth is one of the most influential figures for Hauerwas's thought.²¹ Barth thus represents a connection between Schilder and Hauerwas, and perhaps the only one. This triangle is important to investigate for the conversation between Schilder and Hauerwas.

As I pointed out, Schilder and Barth shared their emphasis on eschatology, both urged their readers and listeners to renewed obedience to the Word of God and sought to bring them into crisis. Both developed a theology that was critical of anything that hinted at a natural theology. Schilder recognized these traits when he was first confronted with Barth's theology.²² His initial response was moderately positive, in line with the broader Barth reception in *Gereformeerde* circles.²³ Barth was seen as a kindred spirit of the neo-Calvinists, although the *Gereformeerden* felt no need for theological assistance with the massive legacy of Kuyper and Bavinck. Schilder's positive assessment of elements of Barth's

²⁰Kamphuis, "Concentratie op wat hoofdzaak is", p. 179.

²¹Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe*, pp. 20, 141-204.

²²See my forthcoming article in Dutch on Barth and Schilder for an extensive treatment of the early Barth and the early Schilder.

²³"Naar het objectieve Woord" in: *De Reformatie* 6-8, p. 59 (November 20, 1925).

thought remained throughout his life, despite the later dominance of his critical engagement, as I will also point out in subsequent chapters.

The critical appropriation of Barth by Schilder and by the *Gereformeerden* at large started with the synod of Assen and surrounded the theme of revelation. One of the open ends in the legacy of Kuyper and Bavinck that required further reflection was revelation and Scripture (see also section 2.2.2). The synod of Assen took a firm stance in the debate concerning this ongoing reflection, and gave ecclesiological sanction to what was an ongoing discussion. While the renewers already experienced the Synod of Leeuwarden in 1920 as a defeat, the synod of Assen was seen as an even more resounding defeat. In contrast to Leeuwarden, however, in Assen there were casualties to mourn. The special synod was convoked to treat a complaint against a sermon held by Jan Geelkerken, a prominent voice among the renewers. Geelkerken had completed his doctoral degree under Bavinck and was part of the *Gereformeerde* elite. It was a sermon in which he had said that the snake in Genesis 3 might not have spoken that ignited the flame. The synod forcefully condemned Geelkerken's expression and the image of his view on Scripture which it had formed, and sanctioned a literal interpretation of Scripture. This decision was attacked by many within and outside the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. It was the critique from the *Hervormde* Theo Haitjema, professor of church history and dogmatics at the University of Groningen, that appropriated Barth's notion of the paradox in revelation to criticize the synod's decision. This positioning triggered the *Gereformeerde* defenders of the synod, including Schilder. Now Barth was no longer an unexpected ally, but was drawn into the camp of the old enemies of the neo-Calvinist emphasis on Scripture.²⁴ The decision of the synod of Assen revived the old debates between Kuyper and Gunning, between *Gereformeerden* and *Ethischen*.

From the publication of Haitjema's book on Karl Barth onwards,²⁵ Schilder's treatment of Barth is critical and centers on his idea of the paradoxical nature of revelation. What is Schilder's concern? According to Schilder, the introduction of the paradox into the doctrine of revelation as suggested by Barth is an

²⁴Apart from the general overview I mentioned above (Endedijk, *De Gereformeerde Kerken 1*, pp. 192-205), see, more specifically, M. E. Brinkman. *De theologie van Karl Barth: dynamiet of dynamo voor christelijk handelen: de politieke en theologische kontroverse tussen Nederlandse barthianen en neocalvinisten*. Baarn: Ten Have, 1983, pp. 15-24, G. Harinck. "The Early Reception of the Theology of Karl Barth in the Netherlands (1919-1926)". Trans. by C. Anderson. In: *Zeitschrift für Dialektische Theologie* 17.2 (2001-01-01), pp. 170-187, pp. 175-187, C. van der Kooi. "Karl Barth als Katalysator: die Niederländische neocalvinistische Barthrezeption nach 1926 als Funktion kulturtheologischer und offenbarungstheologischer Debatten". In: *Zeitschrift für Dialektische Theologie* 25.2 (2009), pp. 95-117, pp. 105-111 and Hennecke, *Karl Barth in den Niederlanden 1*, pp. 102-120.

²⁵T. L. Haitjema. *Karl Barth*. Wageningen: H. Veenman & Zonen, 1926.

alien philosophical idea, which the latter learned from his “patron Kierkegaard”.²⁶ In Barth’s theology, so Schilder posited, this idea now comes to control the idea of revelation. For God’s revelation is said to come as a paradox. We cannot know God in a straightforward manner, but in a paradox alone, in what appears to be a contradiction. If that is true, Schilder goes on to argue, then God’s revelation is no longer reliable and has become irrational. While we indeed cannot grasp the full extent of God’s revelation, that is not to say that God provides humankind with paradoxes to reveal himself. God’s “revelation itself is indeed pure, but not adequate”, is a line that Schilder often repeats.²⁷ God’s revelation is perspicuous. With Barth, Schilder warns, humans decide when reason has reached its limits. But God should be the one to decide. An example illustrates clearly what Schilder means. Revelation is like two ropes that appear through two separate holes in the ceiling. The Calvinist, Schilder writes (thereby denying that category to Barth), believes that the two ropes are one although he cannot see how this is so. For Barth, the twoness of the rope is the essence. “Barth says hallelujah at the divide, the Calvinist at the unity”.²⁸ It is worth quoting Haitjema’s response to this example, when he writes: “The metaphor is quite a nice one. The application, however, should be different. Barth knows his place under the ceiling, in this earthly life. He boasts in God’s grace that reconciles the sinner and makes him hope for redemption. The Calvinist Schilder keeps jumping while shouting his hallelujah and hits the ceiling at every attempt. His jumps are his cramped reasonings to grasp higher unity, while this unity will only be given in full redemption when we are taken up into God’s glory.”²⁹ Barth is ultimately agnostic, Schilder asserts, for with the paradox, our knowledge of God will always remain insecure.

In this polemic, the fine line that separates Barth and Schilder becomes apparent. As I argued in section 2.2.2, Schilder’s dialectical side, the smoke that blurs the light, does not place him on the track of irrationality. While he agrees with Barth that our knowledge of God is limited (inadequate), and also that faith is the absolute starting point, he disagrees with Barth’s notion of the paradox of revelation. Here Schilder’s neo-Calvinist emphasis on creation creates a difference: reason is not annihilated, but restored. Schilder develops this argument in his 1933 dissertation on the paradox. Reason is God’s created order and his revelation demands to be received by human reason: “God does

²⁶“Barths patroon Kierkegaard” Schilder, *Bij dichters en schriftgeleerden*, p. 74.

²⁷“de openbaring zelf is wel zuiver, doch *niet adaequaat*” Schilder, *Bij dichters en schriftgeleerden*, p. 136.

²⁸“Barth zegt halleluja bij de splitsing, de calvinist bij de eenheid.” Schilder, *Bij dichters en schriftgeleerden*, p. 140.

²⁹Schilder, *Tussen ja en neen*, p. 250.

not break *his laws* of reason, but *our sins* of reason.”³⁰ Paradox makes revelation irrational, so Schilder insists, himself championing a revelation that is accessible to human reason: “What we deduce from revelation along logical lines is knowledge of the real mysteries of God.”³¹ As we have noted above (section 2.2.2), there is with Schilder no *sacrificium intellectus*.³²

There is, furthermore, a deeper layer that troubles Schilder, a layer that resonates with a motif in his earlier theology that we already discovered in the previous chapter, namely the close association of God and history. For when our knowledge of God is to be understood as a paradox, if God and history are no more than a line that comes straight from above but never really penetrates the horizontal scheme of history, then something essential about God is lost. For God is not only a transcendent God, he is also immanent. God enters this horizontal scheme of history: “Barth has ‘assassinated’ a beautiful Reformed course of study: the *historia revelationis*, the history of (special) revelation.”³³ God is as transcendent over history as he is immanent in history. Another illustration Schilder uses is that of Barth and Kierkegaard seeing small drops of the idea God in history, drops that vaporize, that have to vaporize. “But according to Reformed theology, God *dug* for himself a *stream*, a river-bed by means of his *revelation*. [...] God’s grace is a river, so long, so efficacious, so dynamic.”³⁴ It is as Kuyper expressed it in his inaugural sermon: The Christian life “does not arise from this earth, but instead breaks in upon the earth”.³⁵ The

³⁰“Nicht *seine* Denkgesetze, sondern *unsere* Denksünden bricht Gott durch die Offenbarung,” Schilder, *Zur Begriffsgeschichte des Paradoxon*, p. 466. See also the 1935 classroom notes: “The teaching of Christ did not dance on God-created reason.” “Maar Christus’ onderwijs heeft niet over de door God geschapen ratio-vormen heengedanst.” (K. Schilder. *Het credo: verslag van de college-voordrachten over het apostolisch symbool*. 1st ed. Fides Quaerit Intellectum, 1935, p. 23).

³¹“Was wir aus der Offenbarung längs des logischen Weges deduzieren, ist ja doch Erkenntnis *wirklicher* arcana Dei” (Schilder, *Zur Begriffsgeschichte des Paradoxon*, p. 451).

³²See K. Veling. “Liefhebben met het verstand: over schriftgeloof en rationaliteit bij K. Schilder”. In: *K. Schilder: aspecten van zijn werk*. Ed. by J. Douma, C. Trimp, and K. Veling. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1990, pp. 231–261, for a good overview of Schilder’s views on reason. Veling is right to connect Schilder’s emphasis on real knowledge with his concern for the nearness of the transcendent God (Veling, “Liefhebben met het verstand: over schriftgeloof en rationaliteit bij K. Schilder”, pp. 232-235).

³³“Barth heeft een prachtig gereformeerd studievak ‘vermoord’; ik bedoel de *historia revelationis*, de geschiedenis der (bizardere) godsopenbaring.” Schilder, *Bij dichters en schriftgeleerden*, p. 106.

³⁴“Maar een *stroom*, een bedding *groef* zich God door de *openbaring*, volgens de gereformeerde theologie. [...] Gods genade is een rivier, zóó lang en zóó werkzaam en zóó beweeglijk.” Schilder, *Bij dichters en schriftgeleerden*, p. 134.

³⁵“Het klimt niet uit deze aarde op, maar breekt er in.” A. Kuyper. ‘Geworteld en gegrond.’ *De Kerk als organisme en instituut. Intreërede uitgesproken in de Nieuwe Kerk te Amsterdam, 10 Augustus 1870*. Amsterdam: H. de Hoogh & Co., 1870, p. 12 (*ET* A. Kuyper. *On the Church*. Ed. by J. Halsey Wood and A. M. McGinnis. Lexham Press, 2015, p. 53).

Calvinist always keeps God's transcendence and immanence in balance. Behind this view on history, Schilder discerns a contrast between time and eternity. In his view, Barth creates an antithesis between time and eternity. God, the wholly other, resides in eternity, while human beings are here in time, on earth. Therefore, everything here on earth below is under the judgment of God, also the human being "with his notions concerning God, his theology, his confession, his church, his piety".³⁶ The church becomes an impossibility. Every time we say something about God, we immediately have to deny it. We need to bring everything into crisis. Schilder's fear is that this divide between time and history is so central in Barth's thought that God's involvement with history is put in peril. It seems as if the divine will for community, to love and to communicate himself, is put at risk. God is not only transcendent, God is also immanent. Without his true involvement with history, both his love and his judgment are weakened. For all the emphasis on the crisis, the real biblical crisis is much heavier if God is also an immanent God, if his judgment is really tangible in history. God does not judge history, he judges sin: "The divine judgment does not curse history and what has become in history, for it itself belongs partly to what has become in history."³⁷ Barth uses the crisis as if to impede human work in history at every point. But according to Schilder, the New Testament says that we never have to stop working. In constant self-criticism, people have the duty to continue horizontal history as God's co-workers. Barth can never have true knowledge of God, but Schilder can by virtue of God's involvement in history, even though he realizes that sin is always implied. Therefore, according to Schilder, neither a concrete church, nor a concrete confession and concrete ethics, are an impossibility. This is not to say that they are perfect, but in their imperfection they still are the Christian's duty, namely to be God's co-workers.

This is how the controversy in Assen, combined with Schilder's critique on Barth, put him on the track of the church. The encounter with Barth through the lens of the synod of Assen functioned as a catalyst to favor certain elements in Schilder's thought at the expense of others. That God is concretely involved in history, that his immanence should not be played off against his transcendence, were elements already present in the previous chapter. Schilder's emphasis on history connected to revelation also undergirds much of what he does in his meditations on the suffering of Christ that were published in 1930. Christ is depicted as a true human, God in the flesh:

³⁶"In den tijd is de mensch, met al wat menschelijk is, ook met zijn voorstellingen omtrent God, zijn theologie, zijn belijdenis, zijn kerk, zijn vroomheid." (Schilder, *Tusschen ja en neen*, p. 344).

³⁷"Het Goddelijk Oordeel vloekt de historie en het historisch gewordene niet, want ten deele behoort het zelf tot wat in de historie werd." (Schilder, *Tusschen ja en neen*, p. 350).

“And there was once a night, which was found on a calendar, on a street in Jerusalem, where not long before a driver cursed, a rooster crowed, a Muslim yawned, and a woman gave herself — There it happened. There was God in the flesh, truly human flesh. He was a theologian, but when he was here on earth below, he also looked with human eyes. There and then. I was taught that this is called ‘revelation’. God came in the flesh. Woe to me if I do not believe it, if I am not active with it.”³⁸

As Jan Veenhof also notes, it is Schilder’s characteristic emphasis on God’s involvement in history that guides his discussion around the synod of Assen.³⁹ Schilder’s insistence on the perspicuity of Scripture stems from his views on God’s presence in history. Scripture refers to real history, and is not mythology (contra Geelkerken), God’s revelation does not escape this world but enters into it (contra Barth). Veenhof notes that this is also why Schilder located the covenant at the heart of his theology: The covenant embodies the real connection between God and humans, and the responsibility of the latter. Even though Veenhof is right, the covenant is a late development in Schilder and will therefore not be treated until the next chapter (see section 4.2.3). As I will argue there, Schilder will fill the covenant with his ecclesiology. Veenhof also notes that Schilder’s view on history strongly determines his ecclesiology.⁴⁰ Buys draws a similar conclusion when he writes that it is Schilder’s doctrine of Scripture that determines his ecclesiology. Yet in my view, he misses the undergirding element of God’s presence in history.⁴¹ The church is an expression of Schilder’s core concern for the *praesentia salutis*.⁴²

It is the doctrine of revelation and the doctrine of the church that will come to take a more prominent place in Schilder’s oeuvre, while eschatology and the

³⁸Translation is based on the defective and outdated translation from Schilder, *Christ in His Suffering*, pp. 194-195. “En deze is er geweest op een avond, die op een kalender stond, in een straatje in Jeruzalem, waar onlangs een chauffeur vloekte, en vannacht een haan kraaide, en een muzelman geeuwde, en een vrouw zich gaf. Dáár is het gebeurd. Dáár is geweest God in het vleesch. Hij was waarachtig vleesch. Hij was theoloog, maar keek, als Hij beneden was, ook uit Zijn eigen menschenoogen. Het was daar. En het was toen. Men heeft mij geleerd, dat dit heet: openbaring. God kwam in het vleesch. Wee mij, als ik het niet geloof, niet er mee werkzaam ben.” Schilder, *Christus in zijn lijden I*, p. 194.

³⁹J. Veenhof. “Schilder en de dogmatiek”. In: *Geen duimbreed! Facetten van leven en werk van prof. dr. K. Schilder 1890-19522*. Ed. by G. Harinck and J. de Bruijn. Baarn: Ten Have, 1990, pp. 202-204.

⁴⁰Veenhof, “Schilder en de dogmatiek”, p. 204.

⁴¹Buys, *Sodat hulle een kan wees*, pp. 29, 60.

⁴²See, similarly, van Bakkum who writes that “the emphasis on history influences his doctrine of revelation, of Scripture, his ecclesiology, his doctrine of sin, his views on culture, his doctrine of the covenant and his Christology” Bakkum, “Klaas Schilder”, p. 156.

arts fade into the background. As I noted above, towards the end of the twenties, Schilder seems to abandon his engagement with the arts. Citations from literary works in general decrease, and important writers who rose to prominence in and after the 1920s simply do not appear in his work. The *Tachtigers*, the pre-Great War literary establishment may still be in view, but the next generation is virtually absent. People like Hendrik Marsman, Jan Slauerhof, Jacques Bloem, and Jan Greshoff, as well as Willem Elsschot, Ferdinand Bordewijk, Menno ter Braak, and Edgar Du Perron, are conspicuous by their absence.⁴³ For Schilder, this was a matter of priorities. In 1932 Schilder published the first version of what would become his *Christ and culture*, and introduced the ‘abstinence option’ in matters of culture.⁴⁴ It is this option that Schilder himself applies on this point. The Kuiperian mandate for breadth and culture remains, but requires shifting of the gears according to the demands of the time. As I will show below, the public character of the church, the ‘breadth’, remains central, but Schilder now focusses on the ‘depth’. The reason for this shift is to be located primarily in the concern that Barth’s theology and the Assen controversy generated for Schilder. He was worried about the influence Barth’s theology would have on the new generation in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, as he repeatedly makes explicit.⁴⁵ The church is the hearth of the cultural mandate, Schilder writes in his 1932 article.⁴⁶ Without a church, there is no point in talking about culture, since without the church the point of departure is lost. Schilder’s concern was, secondly, also inspired by the increasing political tensions in Europe as I described them above. These will be explored in greater detail below.

While the Assen controversy was an internal Dutch affair with limited scope, the debate reflected a broader epistemological crisis that characterized postwar Europe.⁴⁷ As Harinck shows, in the Ralph Janssen and, later, Herman Hoeksema controversy in the United States, as well as in the Du Plessis case in South Africa, which occurred around the same time, the same effects on the Reformed tradition can be discerned.⁴⁸ Barth’s theology is also a reflection of this same epistemological crisis. John Gresham Machen’s polemics among American Presbyterians reflect a similar concern. A few decades later, in parallel with Schilder, Cornelius van Til was to attack Barth on the same front of the paradoxical character of revelation, and in response was even led to develop a Christian

⁴³What Bel discusses in her chapter on the history of Dutch literature from 1900 to 1914 is Schilder’s literary world (Bel, *Bloed en Rozen*, pp. 31-374) The chapters after the war are a world not found in Schilder’s oeuvre; see Bel, *Bloed en Rozen*, 471ff.

⁴⁴Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, pp. 273-277.

⁴⁵Schilder, *Tusschen ja en neen*, pp. 355-359.

⁴⁶Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, p. 279.

⁴⁷See also what I wrote in section 2.1.4 and the first two points of attention mentioned in the first issue of *De Reformatie*.

⁴⁸Harinck, “Geelkerken en de moderne cultuur”, pp. 69-86.

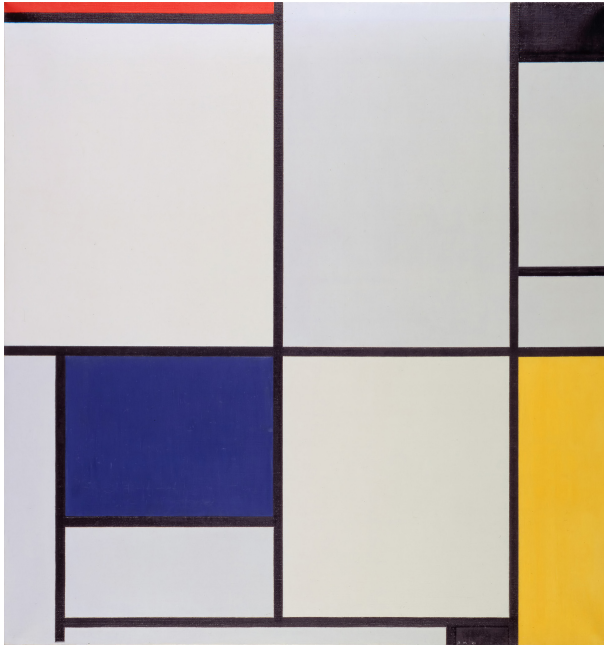


Figure 3.2: ‘Tableau I’ by Piet Mondriaan (1921), Gemeentemuseum Den Haag

epistemology.⁴⁹ Schilder’s focus on epistemology and revelation fits in a broader trend within the Reformed tradition of that time. His subsequent focus on the church was more distinctive of him. The quest for knowledge was not limited to theologians. The Dutch painter Piet Mondriaan (1872-1944) perceived art as a quest for the truth. His revolutionary abstract geometrical forms were the expression of a quest to find “purity”, “truth”, “clarity”, and “the universal” through his art (see figure 3.2).⁵⁰ Schilder paints a doctrine of revelation in straight and clear lines, with sharp contrast and devoid of blurry boundaries.⁵¹

The purpose of this section was to show why we see a turn to the church in Schilder’s oeuvre, historically and theologically. Historically, I pointed out that the debate concerning epistemology, more specifically the epistemology of revelation, as it reached a climax in the synod of Assen and the subsequent

⁴⁹See *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*, which dates back to lectures in 1932. Van Til’s critique on Barth is amongst others, “Common Grace. 2”.

⁵⁰P. Mondriaan. “De nieuwe beelding in de schilderkunst I - XI”. in: *De Stijl: Maandblad voor de moderne beeldende vakken* 1.1-5, 7-12 (1917).

⁵¹See Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper*, p. 244, who draws similar lines between Kuyper and Mondriaan. Bratt also notes that Mondriaan’s father was a neo-Calvinist and cooperated with Kuyper.

encounter with Barth was the most important rationale for this ‘turn’. These key developments in Schilder’s churches on this burning topic caused him to shift his emphasis to revelation and epistemology. J. Kamphuis is right to claim that the synod of Assen is indeed a defining moment in the development of Schilder’s theology, and to complain about its absence in biographical work on him.⁵² The position Schilder took in the debates was that of an emphasis on the concrete reality of history: God is truly immanent in history. God provides humans with true knowledge through revelation. Knowledge of God is possible with the Bible as his perspicuous Word. The connection to the church is as follows: the church is the present day realization of that *praesentia salutis*. Just as concretely as the Bible is a truthful account of God’s salvific acts in history, so the church truly is God’s concrete gathering work in history today. Both are expressions of the unsettling and gracious presence and immanence of God in history. As important as it is to defend the classical Reformed view on Scripture as God’s revealed Word against Barth, it is important to defend the church. This is what will occupy Schilder’s work for the decades to come: the *praesentia salutis* and its concrete realization in the church in the present time. Theological and historical reasons are intertwined. The theological connections between the church and revelation that we also found in the previous section are more prominently emphasized in this period. But how does Schilder define the church and its distinct character? And how does he envisage its cultural engagement? It is to this topic that we will now turn.

3.2 The Church and the World: Assembly and Congregation

In the previous chapter, I sought to describe Schilder’s thought under the headings of ‘depth’ and ‘breadth’. The synod of Assen and the encounter with Barth put Schilder on the track of the depth-strand, resulting in an emphasis on revelation and the church. I also noted that Schilder does not lose the breadth-trajectory, although it does become more implicit. The present chapter will make it increasingly clear that for Schilder the centrality of the church never implies a loss of its public character. More than that, the public nature of the church is essential to its faithfulness. In the article that I will use as a lens to understand this period, it is God’s work to gather his church that stands at its core.

These two strands will lead to an important tension in Schilder’s ecclesiology that lies at the heart of our central question. On the one hand, Schilder seeks to define the church as narrowly as possible: The church is the concrete, visible

⁵²Kamphuis, “Concentratie op wat hoofdzaak is”, p. 172.

institution, the local Sunday assembly where the Word is preached and the sacraments administered. On the other hand, Schilder can call the church God's new humanity with cosmic implications, emphasizing the broad and public nature of the church. This tension in Schilder's work, which will remain throughout his life, is the heart of the relationship between the church and the world. The tension is Schilder's attempt to keep the balance between the distinctiveness of the church on the one hand and its public engagement on the other. In the definition of the church, the balance mostly veers towards the narrow definition: the church is concrete and visible. The broader definition, however, finds its way to the ultimate relativization of the church as merely an instrument in the cultural mandate. No matter how much Schilder emphasizes and polemicizes for the confessional, robust nature of the institutional church, its ultimate end remains culture.

This is the framework of Schilder's ecclesiology of which we will obtain a clear picture in this period. Schilder's thought on the church in this period finds expression in a wide variety of articles, meditations, and sermons. None of these are systematic expositions, but rather writings with a highly specific context and goal. This requires a particular approach to lift out both the unity of Schilder's thought and to do justice to all the particular contexts. There is one article that stands out in that it unites all aspects that return in other articles and is less contextual than many others. I will therefore use it as my point of entry, and from there highlight how these aspects return in other places addressed to specific contexts. The article in question was written by Schilder in 1932 as an Easter meditation.⁵³ The title points to its key topic: the church as assembly (*coetus*) and as congregation. Schilder clearly considered it an important article, since he inserted an extended version of it in the third revised edition of *Wat is de Hel?* (1932) when he published it.⁵⁴ Similarly, the distinction Schilder makes in this article keeps reappearing in other works. See K. Schilder. *Ons aller moeder anno domini 1935: een roepstem beantwoord*. Kampen: Kok, 1935, p. 52 and later in *HC III* where Schilder further develops the same idea as *saamenhang* (coherence), *congregatio*, and *samengang* (gathering), *coetus*.⁵⁵ In what follows, I will first describe the article, and then analyze it and distill from it the key elements of Schilder's thought on the church.

The main point of Schilder's argument concerns the distinction made in article 27 of the Belgic confession, which calls the church a holy congregation or assembly of all true Christian believers.⁵⁶ It is this distinction between *coetus*

⁵³"Coetus et Congregatio (Paschen)" in: *De Reformatie* 12-26, p. 201-202 (25 maart 1932).

⁵⁴Schilder, *Wat is de hel?*³, pp. 36-41.

⁵⁵Schilder, *HC III*, pp. 250-258.

⁵⁶"congregatio sancta seu coetus omnium vere fidelium Christianorum" (J. Bakhuizen van den Brink. *De Nederlandsche belijdenisgeschriften: vergelijkende teksten samengesteld*. Amsterdam:

(assembly) and *congregatio* (congregation) that Schilder will elaborate and use to make his point. These are two moments or aspects that, only if they are taken together, form the church. The first term is the coming-together, the 'assembly', a human activity. 'Congregation' is the being gathered of humans by God. Schilder uses these two elements to describe the history of salvation. He relates three stories. First is that of the angels. This starts with the absence of tension between assembly and congregation, where the angels were in harmony in a cosmic congregation. But then some angels rebelled, and wanted an assembly without congregation by God. God then punishes them: They are congregated by God, but without voluntary assembly. That is what hell is: congregation without assembly. The second story is that of humanity: people desired to assemble with the serpent and not with the cosmos. Now God punishes them in similar fashion: congregation with Satan without assembly, unwilling congregation with the enemy. The third story introduces a turn in the other two. Christ, being man, was violently congregated with the devil without assembly. Schilder then writes about Christ: "And he called unto God: why hast thou forsaken me? Am I unworthy to celebrate the assembly in its cosmic connection? Nonetheless, I seek you in the night, o God: Whoever allows himself to be congregated by you has recovered the mystery of all *coetus*."⁵⁷ And then, on Easter morning, Christ was congregated with the cosmos by God, and Christ himself rose from the dead: assembly and congregation miraculously together. There the church was born. For that is what the church is: assembly and congregation. Assemblies are found everywhere in the world, but it is only when this is paired with congregation that we find the church. And ever since the fall, this is only possible in Christ. Now the church can indeed be broad and cosmic, Schilder writes. In the church, Christ saves the entire creation: "He came back to the angels, to the animals, to the flowers, to the gardener, to heaven and earth, and to a parading human body, and he loved them, and eagerly took them for himself."⁵⁸

Schilder sees a longing for community all around him, in which context we can only think of the rallies of the communists, fascists, and national socialists. They are like Adam who longed for community with the animals, with his wife, and with God, a desire to assemble. The League of Nations, founded in 1919, was also understood by Schilder as such an assembly. But neither the League of Nations, nor any other assembly that is pursued on the world stage,

Uitgeversmaatschappij Holland, 1940, p. 141).

⁵⁷"En Hij riep tot God: waarom verlaat Gij Mij? Ben ik niet waard, den *coetus* in het groot-kosmisch verband te vieren? Nochtans zoek ik U in den nacht, o God: wie zich door u laat congregeren, die heeft 't geheim van allen *coetus* weergevonden." (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 158).

⁵⁸"Hij KWAM weer naar de engelen toe, en naar de dieren, en naar de bloemen, en naar den hovenier, en naar den hemel en de aarde, en naar een pronkend menselijk, en had ze lief, en nam ze gretig voor zich aan." (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 159).

will be lasting. For after the fall, assembly without congregation is ultimately impossible. True assembly is only possible in Christ, in whom both aspects are united. Only there is the cosmos restored. Only there can Adam again name the animals, only there can Adam again kiss Eve, only there can the gardener till his garden again, Schilder seems to be asserting. But this breadth is found only in Christ, and what is outside of Christ cannot be called church, no matter how “hard and shrill” they laugh: “Only in the narrowness of this cosmic life sphere [...] can she [the church] be broad, cosmic, healthy, social, and free”.⁵⁹ The church must be narrow in order to be broad. It must be in Christ in order to have cosmic significance. Thus the church is an anticipation of the future. For in the end there will be two: Assembly that is also congregation (i.e., eternal life), and a congregation that cannot become assembly (i.e., eternal pain).⁶⁰

This article, which is as puzzling as it is captivating, unites many strands that are central to Schilder’s thought. First of all, more than any other piece on the church, this article reveals how much for Schilder the developments of his time were on his mind when he wrote about the church, as I also noted above. Schilder’s turn to the church was not a symptom of his closing his eyes to the world. His turn to the church was a consequence of his having his eyes wide open to the longing for community all around him. As he puts it succinctly elsewhere: “The Reformed churches’ pursuit of purity is merciful, for only in this way can they serve the people of the world with an unspoiled spiritual possession.”⁶¹ And in his focus on the church, Schilder never forgets the world. His story about assembly and congregation is first and foremost a story about the world, about the cosmos. Humans are disconnected not only from God, but also from the cosmos. Assembly without the active gathering by the Creator also implies disconnection from creation. By drawing a parallel between the assembly of the church and other assemblies, Schilder shows at once that he understands this strong tendency to assembly, and is critical of it. This desire for assembly needs to be redirected, according to Schilder. At the same time, the article shows why the church is broad and human, and cannot and may not remain in the forgotten corners of the world. The importance of the church for the world implies a message for the world, but just as much for the church. The breadth of the early Schilder that came to expression in his engagement with the arts returns here in this way. The same year this article appeared, Schilder’s “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven” was published, which would form the basis for one of his best-

⁵⁹“Slechts in de engte van dit kosmisch levensverband [...] kan zij ‘breed’ zijn, en kosmisch, en gezond, en sociaal, en vrij.” (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 160).

⁶⁰Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 156 and Schilder, *Wat is de hel?*²³, pp. 37-38.

⁶¹“Gereformeerde zuiverhouding is barmhartig, want zoo alleen kan ze den wereldmensch dienen met een *onbedorven* geestelijk bezit.” K. Schilder. *Gereformeerd farizeïsme? Zijn de gereformeerden de farizeërs van dezen tijd?* Delft: Meinema, 1925, p. 54.

known publications, namely *Christ and Culture*.⁶² What Schilder writes about the church here is given confirmation there in the central role he reserves for the church in the cultural mandate. The church is *the* instrument par excellence in the cultural mandate. Noteworthy is the earthly depiction Schilder gives of the resurrection of Christ: “a parading human body”.⁶³ The earth is the focus of Christ and of the church. The ultimate assembly is that which congregates with the cosmos. It is fascinating to note that this article is an Easter meditation, and thus about the significance of the resurrection of Christ. That significance is understood as an ecclesial and creational reality. Christ’s resurrection is the inception of the church, which is a reboot of the creation of humanity. The resurrection is not about the victory over sin, it is the affirmation of creation. Christ is the restoration of what once was. That is indeed, as I will argue, the driving force of Schilder’s theology, also of the church.

Secondly, Schilder stresses the connection of Christ and the church, which he himself refers to as the church’s objectivity. This is the depth-element we described in the previous chapter that rose to prominence through the synod of Assen and the encounter with Barth and was reinforced by the developments of Schilder’s time. The importance of the bond between assembly and congregation is the main point of his meditation. The world is full of all kinds of assemblies, but without Christ it is never connected with the congregation of the Creator and his creation. Without Christ the world is ultimately alienated from itself, Schilder claims. How does Schilder see this connection between Christ and the church? This is where Assen comes into the picture: the connection is the Word of God. If the church is serious about Easter, then, and only then, will the church allow her essence to be shaped by the Word of him who is the Lord of life.”⁶⁴ Just as Schilder defended the perspicuity and historicity of Scripture around the synod of Assen and against Karl Barth, so he pleaded for the ‘perspicuity’ of the church. In Barth’s doctrine of revelation, in Geelkerken’s view of Scripture, Schilder perceived one and the same flight from God’s clear and concrete commands. A church without an objective connection to Christ is no longer a church. A church that is not defined by Scripture is no church at all. We will see in greater detail below how Schilder’s historical understanding of revelation and his idea of a concrete church are intimately intertwined.

These two core elements pave the way for the remainder of this chapter in the next two sections that also form the two core elements of my central research question: the distinction of the church and its engagement with the world. Schilder’s article shows that for him there is a deep unity between the

⁶²Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”.

⁶³“een pronkend menselijk” (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 159).

⁶⁴“dan zal de kerk haar wezen weer durven bepalen door het Woord van Hem, die Levensvorst heet, en daardoor alleen.” (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 160).

two, and this is an element that serves the conversation with Hauerwas. Schilder addresses a deep neo-Calvinist concern here, namely the catholicity of the church. Bavinck's famous address on the catholicity of the church finds echoes in Schilder's article. Christianity is a matter of cosmic significance, which should be reflected in the character of the church.⁶⁵ Schilder's words are not, as Bavinck's are, addressed to the *Afscheiding* churches in the late nineteenth century, but to the established *Gereformeerde Kerken* in the unrest of the Interwar period. As I will show, Schilder will continue Bavinck's concern for the catholicity, but wrap it in a different garment.

3.3 The Distinct Church

3.3.1 Church Under the Word

In "Coetus et Congregatio" Schilder stresses that it is of utmost importance for the church to remain the church of Christ. This implies for Schilder first of all, as we also saw above, that the church is a church of the Word. This is what Schilder calls the 'objective' element in his ecclesiology. Without an objective connection to the Word of God, the church is no longer church of Christ and in fact no longer church at all. Unsurprisingly, this is also what Schilder ironically writes about the churches that issued from the Geelkerken schism: "Do *not* ask for the objective, binding, prophetic *word*". Schilder means that something other than the Word of God alone has authority in that church. In characteristic fashion, Schilder opposes that defining feature to others, such as "nice people" or "someone's character".⁶⁶ Such elements make the church into a particular circle, into a group of likeminded people, while the church should really only be defined by the Word of God. In a sermon preached and published in 1931, Schilder again establishes Scripture as the only defining element for the church: "The foundation and the development of a church depends on it. All other things, whether they be pious or not, do not belong to the essence of the church. These are purely natural, worldly."⁶⁷ It is not only historically, but also theologically that the doctrine of revelation proves defining for ecclesiology.

The necessity of the church's connection to Christ for maintaining its objective character was hardly a controversial matter in Reformed ecclesiology,

⁶⁵H. Bavinck. *Katholiciteit van Christendom en Kerk*. Ed. by G. Puchinger. 2nd ed. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1968, p. 34.

⁶⁶ "vraag *niet* naar het objectieve, bindende, profetische *woord*." (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 48).

⁶⁷"Daarvan hangt de stichting van, de opbouw van de kerk als kerk nu af. Al het andere, dat 'stichtelijk' heet is niet uit 't wezen der kerk; dat is bloot-natuurlijk, werelds." (Schilder, *VWPreken I*, p. 473).

also in Schilder's days.⁶⁸ The controversial aspect lay rather in its application. In Schilder's thought in this period, this classical Reformed understanding was applied in two directions that are in tension with each other. The first is that the historical, visible community of the institutional church is essential to what it means to be Christ's church on earth. The second is that being the church of Christ under the Word means that the church is fundamentally dynamic and can never be bound to an institution. This tension between the relativization and endorsement of the institution of the church is characteristic for Reformed ecclesiology. It reflects the middle position it seeks to take between the Roman Catholics' intimate connection between the institution of the church and salvation on the one hand, and the Anabaptists' disconnection of the institutional church's role.⁶⁹ Calvin embodies this tension in the development of his thought. Initially, Calvin emphasized the invisible nature of the church over against the Roman Catholic visible institution.⁷⁰ In the final edition of his *Institutes*, however, the visible church returns as a means to the invisible church. This quote adequately captures the middle ground Calvin seeks: "Although the power of God is not confined to external means, he has, however, confined us to his ordinary method of teaching."⁷¹ In other words, it is not God but we who are restricted to the church. Kuyper also exemplifies this tension and developed it in his own direction. His distinction between the church as institution and organism is also representative of this tension: The institution is on the one hand of considerable importance, but on the other hand also relativized, since the essential church is the organic church.⁷² It is this same tension that leads to

⁶⁸See, e.g., A. Kuyper. *Tractaat van de reformatie der kerken, aan de zonen der Reformatie hier te lande op Luthers vierde eeuwfeest aangeboden*. Amsterdam: Höveker & Zoon, 1883, pp. 8-10 (*ET* Kuyper, *The Church*, pp. 91-93), P. C. van der Vliet. "Jezus Christus en het kerkelijk leven". In: H. L. Both and N. Buffinga. *Jezus Christus en het menschenleven*. Culemborg: De Pauw, 1932, pp. 123-129 and Honig, *Dogmatiek*, p. 738.

⁶⁹See in Schilder's time T. L. Haitjema. *Hoog-kerkelijk protestantisme*. Wageningen: Veenman, 1923, pp. 15-32, who understands Reformed ecclesiology as navigating precisely between these two poles.

⁷⁰W. Balke. *Calvijn en de Doperse radikalen*. Amsterdam: Bolland, 1973, pp. 113-115, 150.

⁷¹"quia etsi externis mediis alligata non est Dei virtus, nos tamen ordinario docendi modo alligavit." (J. Calvin. *Ioannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia. Volumen II. Institutio Christianae Religionis 1559*. Ed. by E. Cunitz, J.-W. Baum, and E. W. Reuss. Brunsvigae: Schwetschke, 1864, book IV, I, 5).

⁷²Kuyper, *Geworteld en gegrond* (*ET* Kuyper, *The Church*, pp. 44-73). Even in the recent reception of Kuyper's thought, there is disagreement over the place of the institution of the church in Kuyper's ecclesiology. The common understanding is that in Kuyper the organic church ultimately prevails over the institution (See, e.g., Wood, *Going Dutch in the Modern Age*, pp. 62-70, 172). Ad de Bruijne has argued that the institution is the heart of Kuyper's ecclesiology, even when it comes to the church's public nature. This interpretation would bring Kuyper very close to Schilder and, as De Bruijne notes, to Hauerwas (A. L. T. de Bruijne. "'Colony of Heaven': Abraham Kuyper's Ecclesiology in the Twenty-First Century". In: *Journal of Markets & Morality*

two unresolved strands in Schilder's thought. They are unresolved, because they surface in different contexts: On one occasion Schilder points to the importance of the institution, at another time he points to its dynamic character. It is to these two strands that we now turn.

3.3.2 The Institutional Church

This first pole of the tension is that Schilder places a heavy emphasis on the church as a historical institution. The historical nature of the church is essential for its connection to Christ. It should come as no surprise that the first clear occurrence of this emphasis is found in *De Reformatie*, weeks after the synod of Assen.⁷³ Although Schilder denied that he wrote the series as a portrait of the "church group that came to stand alone after Assen", that was an easy claim to make since the schism only materialized later on in that year, in August. However, Schilder avowed, "by its fruits can one judge the tree", or, in other words, the formation of the church after Assen is a concrete outcome of the very things Schilder had warned against.⁷⁴ The connection is not only historical, but also theological. In his defence of the synod of Assen, Schilder emphasized the historical reality of what is described in the Scriptures. It is the same historical reality that we see today in the historical institution of the church. The connection is that God is immanent and not too lofty to involve himself closely with concrete human history. God is present in the biblical history, since he is present in the concrete historical institution of the church. It is the theme of the *praesentia salutis*, which I evoked in the previous chapter, that expresses precisely this commitment by Schilder.

The Historical Institution In the series I mentioned above, Schilder refutes the tendency he has perceived of forming circles within the existing church.⁷⁵ That this happens should not be surprising, Schilder claims, since among the things Christ himself had predicted as an eschatological event we find that people will come and say that the Messiah is "in the desert" and "in the secret chambers" (Matthew 24:26).⁷⁶ Jesus then warns his disciples not to listen to those people for their own sake. Schilder writes that he recognizes these warnings in his own time. He interprets this going into the desert and into the secret chambers as the

17.2 (2014), pp. 445–490, pp. 459–466).

⁷³Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 10–46.

⁷⁴"Men heeft deze artikelen aangezien voor een portret van een na Assen afzonderlijk staande 'kerkengroep'. Maar het was zoo niet. [...] aan de vruchten de boom wordt gekend." ("Bij het scheiden van Ds J. E. Vonkenberg," in: *De Reformatie* 14–41, p. 322 (13 July 1934)).

⁷⁵Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 10–46.

⁷⁶Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 15.

formation of esoteric, aristocratic circles within the church. These circles suggest that they have a better vision for the church, arrogantly elevating themselves above the others in the church.⁷⁷ In doing so, Schilder argues, they voluntarily act to deny the unicity of God's acts in history. For if God's deeds in history are just as non-recurring as the death of Christ is, as they would agree, this should apply equally to the rest of salvation history, including that part we have come to call church history. It too numbers among the non-recurring deeds of God in history: "Thus he teaches me to be careful in my judgment of what is 'tradition'; it is indeed impossible to draw sharp lines between divine and human work, but nonetheless there is a divine work through the human, a continuation from fact to fact." This might also be rephrased: "Also in the subjective there is nonetheless His objectivity".⁷⁸ This objectivity is the "institution of the church", and not "the circle" or the "the Christian conventicle".⁷⁹ The formation of circles within the church, akin to the *ecclesiola in ecclesia* of old, is thus denounced by Schilder. The principal argument is that God has connected himself to the institution in a way that should not be ignored.

Schilder adds another argument in an article on "false and true mysticism" in 1929.⁸⁰ In the way Scripture is used by the "false mystics" the problem of ignoring the historical institution of the church becomes apparent. There, Schilder claims, Scripture is used as a "museum of texts", as a "book of solutions matching the mysteries that have been traded beforehand in a blissful game that takes place between God and the soul in the house of the soul."⁸¹ But the Bible must be read as an objective book. The Scriptures themselves can easily be misused. For this reason, the Scriptures require the concrete objective institution of the church. For, Schilder writes, "one cannot sing love songs to the church in the soft moonlight. In the church it is always daytime; in its empire the sun never sets."⁸²

Remarkably, as he had done in the 1926 article, Schilder here almost fully identifies salvation history with church history.

⁷⁷Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 14-16.

⁷⁸"...dat óók in het subjectieve tòch weer Zijn objectiviteit is [...] Dus leert Hij mij voorzichtig te zijn in de beoordeling van wat 'traditie' is; er zijn weliswaar geen scherpe grenzen te trekken tussen goddelijk en menselijk werk, maar er is toch dóór het menselijke heen een goddelijk werk, een voortgaan van feit tot feit" (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 34).

⁷⁹"het instituut van de 'kerk' [...] de kring [...] het christelijk conventikel" (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 15).

⁸⁰First published in "Over ware en valsche mystiek in de zielzorg" in: *De Reformatie* 9-30-34, p. (April - May 1929) and later in Schilder, *Tusschen ja en neen*, pp. 165-232.

⁸¹"teksten-museum" en "boek der oplossingen", passende bij de vooraf in het zielehuis tusschen God en de ziel in zalig spel verhandelde raadselen." (Schilder, *Tusschen ja en neen*, p. 184).

⁸²"Men kan 'de kerk' nu eenmaal geen minneliederen toezingen in den zachten maneschijn. Het is bij de kerk altijd dag; de zon gaat in haar land niet onder." (Schilder, *Tusschen ja en neen*, p. 201).

For there has to be a connection between my present experience and God's continuing work, in two ways: The *God* whom I feel and experience in my soul *now*, at this moment, must objectively, in his own *being* and *work*, be the same as the God of all the ages, the God of Abraham, Isaiah, Paul, the church. Subsequently, also my spiritual *experience* of this moment should be organically one with God's *continuing* work on my soul and the entire *church*; otherwise I would be unable to believe that what I presently feel as a mystical experience *is* truly part of the continuing work of the Spirit in my heart.⁸³

The necessity of objectivity for the true mystic not only turns his face towards God's revelation, but also towards God's church. For, Schilder asserts, God's works are one. His work of revelation, his work of congregation, and his work of our personal conversion are all one: "My aorist (the pointed act of the moment) and God's imperfects (the linear act of God outside and within me)" are a unity.⁸⁴ Later on Schilder writes that the mystic does not want "office, church, and covenant"⁸⁵, but rather the intangible realities of "Christ, Mary, angels, and demons".⁸⁶ And here Schilder endorses the way the church appears as a central mystical entity in Roman Catholic theology. It is a pity, he adds, that the Roman Catholic church is inconsistent in its subsequent appraisal of the monastic mystics. For these mystics "skip the mystical paragraph on the church", yet without the Roman Catholic Church reprimanding them for it, as Schilder would like.⁸⁷ Without this objective church, Schilder fears, "Christendom will be no more than an affair of weaklings who decree the truth from personal insights. And not only the truth, [but] also morality."⁸⁸

It is telling that Schilder's emphasis on the historical church is found most clearly in an article on spirituality. How does this fit in the larger development of his thought? Where Schilder in the previous period argued for a deeper

⁸³Er moet immers samenhang zijn tusschen mijn momenteele ondervinding en Gods doorloopenden arbeid, op twee manieren: de *God*, dien ik *nu*, op dit moment, voel en beleef in mijn ziel, moet objectief, in zijn eigen *wezen*, en *werk*, dezelfde zijn, als de God van alle eeuwen, de God van Abraham, Jesaja, Paulus, de kerk. Vervolgens moet óók mijn geestelijke *bevinding* van dit moment organisch één zijn met Gods *doorgaanden* arbeid aan mijn ziel én aan heel de *kerk*; anders zou ik niet kunnen gelooven, dat wat ik thans als mystieke bevinding voel, ook waarlijk een onderdeel *is* van het voortgaande Geesteswerk in mijn hart. (Schilder, *Tusschen ja en neen*, p. 188).

⁸⁴"mijn aoristus (de punt-handeling van het oogenblik) en Gods imperfecta (de lijn-handeling Gods buiten en binnen in mij)" (Schilder, *Tusschen ja en neen*, p. 190)

⁸⁵Schilder, *Tusschen ja en neen*, p. 195.

⁸⁶Schilder, *Tusschen ja en neen*, p. 197.

⁸⁷Schilder, *Tusschen ja en neen*, p. 197.

⁸⁸"Het allerjongste vonnis" in: *De Reformatie* 6-1, p. 4 (2-10-1925).

spirituality and exemplified this ‘spirituality of doctrine’ in his own meditation and sermons, now he warns against the dangers of subjective spirituality. It cannot be denied that a shift in attention has taken place. It also shows quite adequately how even Schilder’s ongoing concern for spirituality puts him on the track of the church. This serves to indicate that the shift is not a profound change in concerns, but rather represents a developed understanding of existing concerns. The distinction between true and false mysticism which Schilder made in the 1929 article I discussed above is far from new. It is the same distinction that Schilder uses in his earlier articles. There I showed how Schilder pleaded for a mysticism of doctrine. A healthy spirituality is based on sound doctrine, in Schilder’s view. The 1929 article is a specification of that concern: Essential for a spirituality of doctrine is the church that maintains and protects those doctrines: “For if someone turns his back to objective revelation (outside of him), his personality is, according to Scripture, no longer in that condition of spiritual grace which enables him to enjoy and contemplate the objective (historical) truths purely.”⁸⁹ False mysticism is a mysticism that does not spring from God’s objective revelation in his Word. Intimately connected in Schilder’s view is his conviction that the same applies to a mysticism that ignores the objective work of God in history and in the church. This mysticism might sound Christian and even use the Bible, but it fails to take God’s self-revelation in history and in the community of the church seriously.⁹⁰ Its use of the Bible is eclectic and it functions as an affirmation of the experience, rather than the very source of the experience. An example Schilder brings up in a footnote helps us to understand why he thought this was an urgent question. An elderly woman once told her pastor about a personal visit she had experienced of God the Father. Thereafter she was visited by God the Son. Now she was anxiously awaiting the third visit of the Spirit. If He did not come, she would be lost, she told Schilder. Schilder uses this story to show that a good conception of the unity of God’s being and work is essential for a healthy mysticism.⁹¹ This woman had ‘turned her back to objective revelation’ (in this case, the doctrine of the unity of God) in her mystical experience. The result is a fruitless waiting for a third revelation, and unnecessary anguish over her salvation. Schilder’s concern for a sound spirituality puts him on the track of the objectivity of the

⁸⁹“Want zoodra de mensch in zijn innerlijke ziels- en geestesfuncties ook maar een oogenblik met den rug naar de objectieve openbaring (de openbaring buiten hem) gaat staan, is zijn persoonlijkheid volgens de Schrift niet meer in dien staat van geestelijke genade, waarin hij de voorwerpelijke (z.g. historische) waarheden zuiver genieten en aanschouwen kan.” (Schilder, *Tusschen ja en neen*, pp. 179-180).

⁹⁰Schilder, *Tusschen ja en neen*, pp. 189, 195. See also Bruijne, “Schilders vroege spiritualiteit en de latere vrijgemaakten”, pp. 60-61.

⁹¹Schilder, *Tusschen ja en neen*, p. 190.

church. His distinct spirituality is not only a mysticism of doctrine, but also a mysticism of the church.

At this point we are again confronted with the unity of Schilder's thought, which finds confirmation in his continued attention for spirituality. The publication of Schilder's key spiritual work, the trilogy on Christ in his suffering, was published in the middle of this period (in 1930), characterized by his 'turn to the church'. Moreover, as I noted also in the previous chapter, Schilder kept revising the text of the trilogy throughout his life. The second edition even remained unfinished.⁹² Furthermore, Kees Trimp rightly remarks that the article on true and false mysticism is a kind of a summary of all his work on 'true mysticism'.⁹³ Indeed, Schilder not only warns against false mysticism, but also repeats the necessity of spirituality: "To believe, to 'be in God', 'walking with God', is more than intellectual knowledge. The depths of our souls have to be touched, made alive, stirred, and activated with and through God."⁹⁴ Concretely, Schilder recommends the pastor to encourage mysticism, but only "after the image of objective and revealed salvation is depicted in its nakedness, clarity, and sharpness."⁹⁵ 'Objective' church and 'subjective' spirituality are for Schilder complementary. His 'turn to the church' coincides with a continued attention for spirituality. When scholars are critical of the prevailing forensic emphasis in Schilder's later thought, that is certainly understandable, especially given his attitude in the 1944 schism (see section 5.2.1).⁹⁶ It has to be kept in mind that the later Schilder of the objective realities is not a different one from the Schilder who had the development of true mysticism as a priority.

Returning to the core of this section, we see Schilder emphasize the role of the historical institution of the church as essential for the church to maintain

⁹²While the first two volumes were revised and expanded in the 1940s, the third volume remained untouched. See K. Schilder. *Christus in zijn lijden: overwegingen van het lijdensevangelie III: Christus bij den uitgang van zijn lijden*. 2nd ed. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1952.

⁹³C. Trimp. "Belijnde bevinding". In: *K. Schilder: aspecten van zijn werk*. Ed. by J. Douma, C. Trimp, and K. Veling. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1990, pp. 147-168, pp. 157-158.

⁹⁴"dat gelooven, dat 'zijn in God', en 'wandelen met God' niet opgaat in het verstandelijk kennen. Dat onze ziele diepten moeten zijn aangeraakt, levend gemaakt, bewogen, werkzaam gemaakt door en met God" (Schilder, *Tussen ja en neen*, p. 226).

⁹⁵"het beeld van het voorwerpelijke, van God geopenbaarde, heilsgoed, vooraf naakt, scherp, duidelijk vóór die oogen heeft gestaan" (Schilder, *Tussen ja en neen*, p. 226).

⁹⁶See, e.g., A. C. de Jong. *The Well-Meant Gospel Offer: The Views of H. Hoeksema and K. Schilder*. 1954, who asks the question whether or not Schilder's view on the covenant is dominated by its forensic aspect. Also in the next period, where the only time Schilder explicitly treats spirituality is found, the discussion is negative. Here there is only a warning against its individual character alienating from Scripture and the church, and a warning against Barthianism (K. Schilder. *College-verslagen der door Prof. Dr. K. Schilder in Amerika gehouden lezingen*. Ed. by J. Verlaare and R. H. Bremmer. 1st ed. Kampen: Eerste Kamper Schrijfkamer, 1939, pp. 36-39). In Strauss, *Alles of niks*, pp. 229-241, the question is taken up. Strauss's answer is nuanced, but he finds the risk of objectivism real for Schilder.

its connection to Christ. The church is an essential element in interpreting and communally living God's Word in Scripture, maintaining its objective character. It guards against both an elitist and a mystical subjectivism that ignores God's objective work in history, also in the church. Having explored this pole of the indicated tension, Schilder seems to lean towards the Roman Catholic side, an inclination he himself also noted, as we saw above.⁹⁷ Schilder's contemporaries were likewise aware of this inclination and expressed their concern.⁹⁸ In 1929 Schilder got himself involved in a polemic with the editor-in-chief of a prominent *Gereformeerde* newspaper, H. Diemer. Diemer accused Schilder of ecclesial absolutism, in the sense that only one church can be the true church. In 1933, *De Wekker*, the ecclesial journal of the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*, called Schilder's view on the church Roman Catholic. It suggested that Schilder learn from his *Gereformeerde* colleagues from *De Heraut* in what they taught about the pluriformity of the church.⁹⁹ Especially when Schilder's thought was taken precisely in the direction of ecclesial absolutism in the churches that issued from the schism under his leadership in 1944, this came to be the main perspective for the study of Schilder's ecclesiology. In the next section (3.3.3) on the second pole of his ecclesiology, I will show that this concern for an ecclesial absolutism of Roman Catholic tendencies is balanced by Schilder's dynamic view of the church. His contemporaries rightly felt that Schilder was onto something different from what they were used to. Schilder had not yet challenged the familiar distinctions between the visible and the invisible church, between the institution and the organism, but that would soon change.¹⁰⁰ Yet the *Afscheiding* tradition had known voices similar to that of Schilder.¹⁰¹

Confession We have now seen that for Schilder the faithfulness of the church is bound up with its character as an institution in continuity with the historical

⁹⁷I realize that the Roman Catholic view is far more nuanced than the caricature that was used in Schilder's time, and am even more aware that many who identify as Roman Catholic hold different views. Nonetheless, the official papal documents continue to emphasize the unicity of the Church of Rome as the sole Church of Christ, explicitly denying this qualification to all other "ecclesial communities" (J. Ratzinger and A. Bovone. *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion*. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1992, §17). The similarities between Schilder and the affirmations in this document are striking.

⁹⁸In 1942 Schilder even calls this critique a pet topic (K. Schilder. *De kerk: verslag van de door prof. Schilder gegeven intermezzo-colleges over de problemen i.z. de kerk n.a.v de Heraut-artikelen over het leerstuk der kerk*. Ed. by N. Bruin and C. van Venetië. 1st ed. Utrecht, 1942, p. 116).

⁹⁹A.S., "Exclusivisme veroordeeld" in: *De Wekker* (14 april 1933), p.6. For *De Heraut*, see the glossary.

¹⁰⁰Honig, *Dogmatiek*, pp. 712-717.

¹⁰¹See, e.g., Schilder's teacher Lucas Lindeboom (Lindeboom and Bronsveld, *De Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*).

church in obedience to Scripture. I noted that Schilder leans to the Roman Catholic side of the polarity I have identified in his thought. The historic continuity of the church, as I called it, may seem to suggest that something like apostolic succession is what Schilder had in mind. That is certainly not the case. The question then is what the content of the institution guaranteeing the historical continuity is. In line with an emphases that has also already been noted in the previous chapter, Schilder's answer is: the confession.

In 1925 Schilder responds to a certain A. Elffers, who had abandoned his local *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* and urged the youth in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* to do the same. The reason for this call was a perceived lack of room for progress in that church. Schilder's answer is that the church is more than a few pastors or individuals: "Above the insight of Their Majesties the Individuals rises, thanks be yet to God, the church's creed".¹⁰² The creed of the community is what matters, not the opinion of any given individual. Clearly in line with his earlier emphasis on the objective importance of the institution, Schilder now points to the confession. It is not by a selection of pastors or other individuals that the church should be judged, but by its adherence to the confession. That is Schilder's objective hallmark of the church. The confession is also the weapon he uses against the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*. Schilder always calls them to unity with the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, since they have a shared confession, insisting that other differences should not play a role in keeping them divided. The confession is all that matters.¹⁰³

For Schilder, the official documents of the church are therefore of great importance for it. They essentially decide whether or not a church is a true church, and whether or not it is connected to Christ. Often Schilder speaks of the lawful (*wettige*) church. For him, this is a major issue with regard to the church. This emphasis should be understood against the background of the 1834 *Afscheiding*, even though the concept dates back at least to Calvin.¹⁰⁴ In the Secession tradition the question regarding the lawful church figured prominently for the justification of the schism.¹⁰⁵ The underlying idea is that there can only be one lawful church in one place at one time. If there are two, they either need to merge, or else one is lawful and the other by consequence is not. During

¹⁰²"Want boven het inzicht van H.H. M.M. de Individuen stijgt, God zij nog de dank, het credo van de kerk." ("Het allerjongste vonnis" in: *De Reformatie* 6-1, p. 5 (2-10-1925)).

¹⁰³Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 224-228.

¹⁰⁴"conventus legitimus" (Calvin, *Institutio*, book IV, 1, 9) and "ecclesia legitima" (Calvin, *Institutio*, book IV, 1, 13).

¹⁰⁵See the *Acte van Afscheiding of Wederkering* (October 13, 1834), where adherence to the confession is a key motif, and the recognition of the suspended minister De Cock as a *lawful* minister, in spite of his suspension, the main point. See later W. Ramaker. *Het beginsel der afscheiding en de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*. Harlingen: Drukkerij G. Bouritius, 1934, pp. 14, 21, 26.

the 1834 *Afscheiding*, the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* stopped being a lawful church in the eyes of the seceders for its bad governance, which was out of line with the confession.¹⁰⁶ Yet both for Schilder and De Cock, the confession has to be more than a formal piece of paper. De Cock's critique of the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* in the early nineteenth century was not that the confessions were absent from its formal documents, since they did number among them, but rather that they were neither taken literally nor applied. Schilder echoes this critique. The confession needs to have a real place in the form of authoritative documents - not as historical documents that can be used selectively, but as formulations of the actual confession of the church, by which the church speaks for everyone.¹⁰⁷

For Schilder this confession was without doubt the Three Forms of Unity as they functioned in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*: the Heidelberg Catechism, The Belgic Confession, and the Canons of Dordt. But this confession is not static, as Schilder writes in his apology for the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in 1925. For Scripture is the sole authority, and the confession should be adapted if there is scriptural reason to do so. And this is precisely what the *Gereformeerde Kerken* had done, Schilder reminds his readers.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, in 1905 the Synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* had amended article 36 of the Belgic Confession.¹⁰⁹ Towards the end of his life, Schilder himself also suggested altering the confession on the issue of God's omnipresence as expressed by the Heidelberg Catechism in Lord's Day 10.¹¹⁰

In sum, a shared communal confession is what makes the church an objective church. This confession is subject to change, since Scripture is the sole authority.¹¹¹

In the above, I already placed Schilder's emphasis on the confession as a juridical reality against the backdrop of the *Afscheiding*. With this juridical emphasis, Schilder finds himself in a certain strand of the secession tradition,

¹⁰⁶G. Harinck and L. Winkeler. "De negentiende eeuw". In: *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*. Ed. by H. Selderhuis. 3rd ed. Utrecht: Kok, 2014, pp. 601-734, pp. 644-648.

¹⁰⁷K. Schilder. *Ons aller moeder anno domini 1935: een roepstem beantwoord*. Kampen: Kok, 1935, pp. 78-81. See also K. Schilder. *De Kerk*. Ed. by J. Kamphuis. Vol. 2. Verzamelde werken III. Nijkerk: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1962, pp. 327-340, where Schilder defends the duty of confessing against Karl Barth in 1937. The essence of the disagreement with Barth is, again, the view on Scripture as a "concrete norm" Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 338.

¹⁰⁸Schilder, *Gereformeerd farizeïsme?*, 43ff. See also Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 428 and Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 82.

¹⁰⁹Endedijk, *De Gereformeerde Kerken I*, pp. 105-107.

¹¹⁰Schilder, *HC IV*, p. 204.

¹¹¹See similarly J. Douma. "K. Schilder in zijn hantering en waardering van de gereformeerde confessie". In: *K. Schilder: aspecten van zijn werk*. Ed. by J. Douma, C. Trimp, and K. Veling. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1990, pp. 35-65, pp. 62-65.

in what Dirk Kuiper has called the “legitimistic-ecclesiocentric” pattern represented by Lucas Lindeboom (see section 2.1.2).¹¹² This is helpful in situating the particularity of Schilder’s emphasis. This was one part of the secession tradition, while Kuiper labels Bavinck as a representative of the more ecumenical strand in the secession tradition. The juridical emphasis was also present in Kuiper, even though for Kuiper the confession was not as central as it was for Schilder. Within the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, the importance of the confession as defining for the church was not really contested. In this sense, Schilder reflects the consensus of his context. Also within the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, the confessional and *gereformeerde* currents emphasized the confession in a similar fashion.¹¹³ On the other hand, the *ethische* current in the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* relativized doctrine and the confession, and stayed aloof from such forensic notions. Schilder’s forensic approach to the church and the confession was therefore not unusual in his context, although it also certainly was not the only way in which the church was viewed.

Alongside this forensic character, Schilder’s emphasis on the confession also has a rational, verbal hue. It is the words, the concepts as a product of human reason, that are defining when it comes to the church. Again, this nuance was common to Schilder’s context, even though it did separate him from the rising Barthianism within the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*. Haitjema in particular had adopted the paradox as an essential step forward in the doctrine of revelation, overcoming what he saw as a problematic rationalism.¹¹⁴ For Schilder, this emphasis on the confession fits his opposition to Barth and his view on reason’s function in receiving revelation. Once again, both his view on the church with a concrete confession, and his view on reason’s potential to have real knowledge of God, are expressions of his concern for the immanence of the transcendent God, the *praesentia salutis*.

Schilder’s emphasis goes out to the objective character of the church. In line with his Reformed forebears, he makes the church’s submission to the Word of God his primary concern. This is applied, however, in his argument for a historic and visible church. At this point Schilder’s later critique on the classical distinction between the visible and the invisible church is anticipated, as is his critique on Kuiper’s distinction between the organic and institutional church. Even though Schilder’s discussion may not be explicitly critical yet, all the emphasis still is on the visible and institutional church. This emphasis betrays a characteristic forensic and rational bias in Schilder.

¹¹²Kuiper, *De voormannen*, pp. 226-227.

¹¹³Kuiper, *De voormannen*, pp. 170-174.

¹¹⁴Haitjema, *Hoog-kerkelijk protestantisme*, pp. 33-54 and Haitjema, *Karl Barth*.

Community and Epistemology In Schilder's emphasis on the historical institution over against mysticism, it would be a mistake to overlook the communal element reverberating there. This element is perhaps most clearly expressed in the article I presented as the lens to Schilder's work on the church from this period, "Coetus et congregatio".¹¹⁵ This Easter meditation can be read as a retelling of salvation history in terms of a breaking and restoration of community both with God and, through him, with humankind. Schilder depicts humanity as having a natural aspiration to assembly, to community. This used to be in a harmonious relationship with the divine act of congregating, but sin has broken this harmony. It is in Christ alone, and thus in the church, that this harmony is principally restored. This is why Schilder also refers to the church as an Easter miracle, the miracle of restored community "with angels and animals, with heaven and earth, with matter and spirit, with men and flowers."¹¹⁶ This restored fellowship is in fact salvation itself. The church is salvation, or at least the beginning of it. On this point, Schilder comes very close to Hauerwas.

The communal emphasis aligns itself well with the anti-individualistic tendency that Schilder shows in his mysticism critique (see the previous section).¹¹⁷ The fact that the institution of the church is presented in Schilder's critique of subjective mysticism is telling in that regard. It is the community that is a vital element of the Christian life. The confession is so valuable in the sense that it is a communal confession that transcends individual opinions. The understanding of God's revelation in Scripture requires the community of the church. I will show how, in the next period, the notion of the covenant becomes a key category in Schilder's work and for him the best way to describe the essence of the Christian life. It is this communal aspect which we recognize here that finds its way into the notion of covenant in that next period (see section 4.2.3). Covenant not only centers on community with God, but also approaches it in a communal way. God seals a covenant with his people. It is no coincidence that covenant and church are closely associated in Schilder's thought, since the church is the 'circle of the covenant'.

This emphasis on the communal aspect of the church fits Schilder's time. The word 'community' (*gemeenschap*) was a buzzword of the Interwar period. 'Gemeenschap' was the title of a prominent Roman Catholic cultural magazine founded in 1925. The idea of community is at the heart of the rising ideology of communism. This dynamic applies also to the theological scene. In 1930 Dietrich Bonhoeffer published his doctoral dissertation *Communio Sanctorum*, in which he unfolded his communal ecclesiology. As far as I know, Bonhoeffer

¹¹⁵Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 155-160.

¹¹⁶"met engelen en dieren, met hemel en met aarde, met stof en geest, met mensen en met bloemen." Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 159.

¹¹⁷Schilder, *Tussen ja en neen*, pp. 167-234.

and Schilder were not aware of each other's existence, but this did not prevent similarities from appearing in their thought on the church.¹¹⁸ Interestingly, in the article "Van kerk tot kring een afval" from 1926, Schilder himself identifies the longing for community as an important feature of his time.¹¹⁹ Schilder presents the church as a counter-community, as *the* community par excellence, at a time when the longing for community was pervasive.

The church as a community also has an existential layer for Schilder. As I noted in the previous chapter (see section 2.1.3), his works of youth give evidence of a melancholic spirit and an inclination towards loneliness. For that reason, Dee chose to give his collection of Schilder's early work the title *Loneliness and Community* (*Eenzaamheid en gemeenschap*). In his introduction, Dee echoes what I also suggested above, namely that for Schilder community with God and with the church was the existential answer to his loneliness and hardships.¹²⁰ Notwithstanding the speculative nature of his suggestion, I do believe Dee is right to point to an existential layer here which is clearly visible in Schilder's work, also when he writes about the church. The community of the church is not a cold, objective reality where the believer must go, but rather the sole refuge for lost souls. In that sense, it may help to recall what I wrote above about the role of the church in Schilder's spirituality (see this section under 'Historical Institution'). Dee's suggestion that this resonates with Schilder's own experience sheds light on the way the church increasingly became a key topic for Schilder. His role in the schism of 1944 serves to confirm this existential layer. It helps to understand Schilder's stubbornness, and his repeated emphasis on the ethical side of the controversy: Schilder felt betrayed. The community where he had found refuge and that he had loved so much had now cast him out. That wound was difficult if not impossible to heal.¹²¹ In the light of our conversation with Hauerwas framing this research, it is noteworthy that a similar biographical element can be found also in him. For in his autobiography, Hauerwas also speaks about his loneliness and the significance of the community of the church.¹²²

Returning to the implications of this communal emphasis, it is appropriate to ask whether or not Schilder sees the church as playing a role in revelation and thus having an epistemic function in our knowledge of God. In the above, I

¹¹⁸See B. Kamphuis. "Schilder en Bonhoeffer". In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, pp. 35–48, pp. 45–46, where Kamphuis compares Schilder and Bonhoeffer, and points to similarities in their respective ecclesiologies.

¹¹⁹Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 10–46.

¹²⁰Schilder, *Eenzaamheid en gemeenschap*, pp. 143–144.

¹²¹See section 5.2.2 for a more detailed discussion.

¹²²S. Hauerwas. *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.

already pointed to Schilder's perspective on the church as a kind of "continued revelation".¹²³ Abraham, Paul, and the church are for Schilder all in one and the same line.¹²⁴ This connection is affirmed by remarks Schilder makes in some of his early sermons. In 1924 Schilder preached that Christ does not just reveal himself *to* us: "He reveals himself, primarily *to*, then *in*, and finally *through* us. [...] Therefore, we accept this church with all its scandal and battle."¹²⁵ An earlier sermon, preached on Pentecost in 1920, witnesses the same trajectory. Here Schilder asks a rhetorical question: "Is that what God wants to say? That he comes with his Spirit to the world in order to reveal himself in His church?"¹²⁶ Such an understanding would put Schilder at odds with his Reformed heritage, and with his own beliefs, in compromising the '*sola scriptura*'. Is the historical church a kind of continued revelation? Does Schilder not end up becoming an anti-hierarchical Roman Catholic of sorts? At other instances Schilder is careful to keep church and Scripture apart.¹²⁷ As such, however, we find Schilder leaning particularly far in the direction of the 'Roman Catholic pole' of the tension I described above.

That there is more to this than just a few scattered quotes becomes clear when we view this from the context of his thought. I have repeatedly called the *praesentia salutis* the heart of Schilder's thought, and identified it as the impetus behind his ecclesiological emphases. In the sermon I quoted above, Schilder draws that connection himself. He speaks of God who "makes his continued presence visible in his people".¹²⁸ In that sense, this notion of the church that

¹²³See also Buys, *Sodat hulle een kan wees*, pp. 56-57, who affirms that the church is for Schilder part of "ongoing revelation" and is also concerned to make sure that the emphasis on human responsibility does not turn the church into a "co-revealer". In contrast to Buys, I approach this question via the communal-ecclesial route (see also further below on 'Individual').

¹²⁴Schilder, *Tussen ja en neen*, p. 188.

¹²⁵"Eerst *aan*, daarna *in*, eindelijk *door* ons openbaart hij zich. [...] En daarom aanvaarden wij deze kerk met al haar ergernis en al haar strijd." (K. Schilder. *Om woord en kerk: deel I*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1948, p. 124).

¹²⁶"Heeft God dat willen zeggen, dat Hij in Zijn Geest komt tot de wereld, om in Zijn Kerk zich te openbaren als de God van vuur, die doopt met den Geest en met vuur, die het vuur van den ijver ontsteekt in het hart, die Zijn blijvende tegenwoordigheid doet zien in Zijn volk, vanwaar Hij groote, vurige dingen op aarde zal doen? Heeft God dat willen zeggen?" (Schilder, *OWK I*, p. 53).

¹²⁷E.g.: "When Dr. Van Niftrik says that the Bible can only be properly read and understood in the church, then we are inclined to think of Roman Catholic principles, not Reformed. The Reformed view is to say that Scripture is properly read and understood from Scripture itself." (K. Schilder. *De Kerk*. Ed. by J. Kamphuis. Vol. 3. Verzamelde werken III. Nijkerk: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1965, p. 153, "Maar als nu dr. Van Niftrik zegt, dat eerst van uit de kerk de Bijbel recht gelezen en verstaan wordt, dan moeten wij aan Roomse en niet aan gereformeerde grondgedachten denken. Gereformeerd is het, te zeggen, dat de Schrift van uit de Schrift recht gelezen en verstaan wordt.")

¹²⁸See note 126.

continues revelation fits the wider structure of Schilder's theology. One should also recall how Schilder's 'turn to the church' coincides with his defence of revelation against Barth. If God is really present in the church, does this not imply that the church becomes essential for knowing God?

This claim is further substantiated in the light of Harry Kuitert's criticism on Schilder's doctrine of revelation. Kuitert finds that Schilder's concept of accommodation and anthropomorphisms introduces a deeply subjective element into the doctrine of revelation. In Schilder's doctrine of revelation, the notion of accommodation is essential: revelation is God's accommodation to humanity. It is never an *opus immanens*, but always *opus exeuns*: God's revelation is not his own being directly. God accommodates himself and uses anthropomorphisms to make himself intelligible to people.¹²⁹ According to Kuitert, Schilder fails to account for who decides when Scripture speaks 'anthropomorphically' and when it speaks 'scientifically'. Thus Schilder uses his concept of accommodation to make a subjective selection in Scripture. As an example, Kuitert shows how Schilder values scriptural references to God's immutability over references that point to remorse or change in God.¹³⁰ Kuitert then concludes that Schilder makes room for subjective elements in his theological system. Rather than subjective elements, I would suggest with Stellingwerf that Schilder, "when Scripture fails to support his doctrines sufficiently, turns to the confession as doctrine of the church." In the church Schilder finds "an objective support".¹³¹ If Kuitert is right, this confirms my suggestion that Schilder needs the church as an objective anchor in his doctrine of revelation to avoid subjectivity.

This element in Schilder's thought has to be handled with care, and should not be over-interpreted. When the house of Schilder's thought is furnished in the next chapter and the details of his ecclesiology are filled in, this idea does not return with greater clarity. What it does show is that Schilder attributes great significance to the concrete institution of the church, and even veered off to anticipate the Hauerwasian notion of the church's epistemic function. Schilder's emphasis on the concrete, visible community of the church finds a clear parallel in Hauerwas. And the church as an epistemic category in particular, while implicit in Schilder, is explicit in Hauerwas. I will return to this apparent overlap in the final chapter.

¹²⁹See Schilder, *Bij dichters en schrijftgeleerden*, pp. 392-411 and Schilder, *Zur Begriffsgeschichte des Paradoxon*, pp. 419-447.

¹³⁰H. M. Kuitert. *De mensvormigheid Gods: een dogmatisch-hermeneutische studie over de anthropomorfismen van de heilige Schrift*. Kampen: Kok, 1969, pp. 107-118.

¹³¹J. Stellingwerff. "Kritiek op K. Schilder als filosoferend dogmaticus." In: *Philosophia Reformata* 27 (1962), pp. 106-125, p. 107.

Individual The tension between the dynamic and the institutional church lies at the heart of Schilder's understanding of what it means for the church to be the church of Christ. This tension has a parallel in another associated tension that helps us to further understand what Schilder envisages: This is the tension between the communal and the individual. In light of the conversation with Stanley Hauerwas, this element is noteworthy. For Hauerwas strongly emphasizes the communal element of the church as being essential to its character. Schilder agrees with that emphasis although he, in contrast to Hauerwas, casts the communal element in terms of the institution of the church. In tension with the communal aspect, we find Schilder emphasizing an individual element in his ecclesiology.

It is again in "Coetus and congregatio" that this element presents itself as a key notion. The church, Schilder argues there, consists of two complementary moments: The divine congregation and the human gathering together form the church. This implies that the human share is vital to what it means to be the church. In the church as well, we are "God's co-workers", as Schilder would insist also in regard to the cultural mandate.¹³² Here we encounter the typically individualistic modern element in Schilder's theology to which I already drew attention in the first chapter (see 2.1.1). Concretely, this means that Schilder can say that the question of church membership is one that needs to be addressed "every Sunday by everyone"¹³³ Schilder understands this individual moment as what the Belgic Confession means when it says that "all people are obliged to join and unite with" the true church.¹³⁴ In 1934 Schilder writes about people in a 'false church': "Let everyone force the church to which he belongs to make a decision. That certainly is tiring. Serving God always is, although there is also rest in that tiredness".¹³⁵ No matter how important the church is as a community, the responsibility of the individual remains central for Schilder. On the one hand the individual needs the church, on the other hand the church is dependent on the individual.

The individual emphasis has a christological root for Schilder. Above I showed how he seems to recast Christology in communal terms. A case can also be made for a Christology of individual responsibility. Schilder understands Christology in terms of the threefold office of Christ, a classical Reformed theme.¹³⁶ This office-Christology is explored by Schilder at length in his trilogy

¹³²Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 160.

¹³³Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 108.

¹³⁴Belgic Confession, article 28. Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 150.

¹³⁵"Laat ieder de kerk, waarin hij is, dwingen tot een 'Entscheidung'. Het is vermoeiend, zeker. Maar God dienen maakt altijd moe, al geeft het ook daarin rust." (Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 126).

¹³⁶See, e.g., the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 12, where Christ's title 'Messiah' is explained using the threefold office of prophet, priest, and king. What it means to be a Christian

on the suffering of Christ. This work is a long plea for understanding the work of Christ according to his office, that is, an Old Testament juridical framework. Christ does not act in a vacuum, but according to a specific mandate, an office, prepared in the Old Testament and instituted by God.¹³⁷ In his article on Christ and Culture from 1932, Schilder provides a description of the method he himself went on to apply in the trilogy: "The work of 'Jesus' cannot be portrayed by anyone until it has become clear to us from the whole of Scripture what Jesus does as the Christ and what he has to do as God's *office bearer* par excellence in, and for, and with the cosmos" (emphasis mine).¹³⁸ It is, however, not the hermeneutic that is interesting for our survey, but the way Christ is seen as bearing an office and fulfilling a mandate. Like the Heidelberg Catechism, Schilder mirrors Christ's office in the office of the believer.¹³⁹ The priesthood of all believers was a favorite trope for Schilder.¹⁴⁰ This explains his emphasis on the resurrection of Christ as the resurrection of a concrete human body. The resurrection is re-creation. Humankind, creation, and Creator are once again in harmony. Christ embodies and enables that harmony. The parallel between Schilder's description of the resurrection as Christ coming to the "parading human body"¹⁴¹ and of the reborn Christian as the "perfect, beautiful, ideal human being" is no coincidence.¹⁴² The resurrection and significance of Christ lie in the empowerment of the human being. People have an office, a mandate, a job to do. Christology centers on the individual empowerment of the believer. This is a central aspect of the cultural mandate, as I will show below. It is also reflected in the church, where the responsibility of the individual occupies a key position.¹⁴³

Towards the end of the 1932 article on Christ and culture, Schilder explicitly warns against the possibility of the individual becoming lost in the masses and "killing personality",¹⁴⁴ in a way that is reminiscent of Ortega y Gasset's *La*

is subsequently explained along those same three offices.

¹³⁷See, e.g., Schilder, *Christus in zijn lijden I*, pp. 229-230 (*ET* Schilder, *Christ in His Suffering*, pp. 229-230).

¹³⁸Het werk van „Jezus” is voor niemand te kenschetsen, zoo lang niet uit het geheel der Schrift ons duidelijk geworden is, wat Jezus als Christus doen komt, en dus, als ambtsdrager Gods bij uitnemendheid, te doen heeft in en voor en ook met den kosmos. Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", p. 237.

¹³⁹Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", pp. 282-285.

¹⁴⁰See, e.g., Schilder, *VW Kerk I*, p. 361.

¹⁴¹Schilder, *VW Kerk I*, p. 160.

¹⁴²Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", p. 251.

¹⁴³For Schilder on human responsibility, see also J. Veenhof. "Medewerkers van God: K. Schilder over plaats en taak van de mens in het handelen van God." In: *Achter den tijd: opstellen aangeboden aan dr. G. Puchinger ter gelegenheid van zijn vijftenzestigste verjaardag*. Ed. by W. F. de Gaay Fortman et al. Haarlem: Acta-Media, 1986, pp. 139-154.

¹⁴⁴Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", p. 281.

Rebelión de las masas.¹⁴⁵ Schilder emphasizes that community proceeds from a personal relationship with Christ. The individual “never separates, but always distinguishes”.¹⁴⁶ This will become especially important when we develop Schilder’s views on culture. The church’s cultural engagement runs via the individual. He is the office bearer with a cultural mandate:

“The tension between the ongoing conflict with the world, and the obligation to never leave the world, will only be found where *personality* always fulfils the office before God and derives from [that office] the mandate for his own cultural task; [that is,] where the individual is ‘addressed’ *personally* in the *community* (of the church): alive and forcefully.”¹⁴⁷

For Schilder, the individual and the communal are in tension. He sends the mystics to the church, but criticizes the masses for their oppression of the individual.

At this point, lines can again be drawn to both the preceding and following periods of Schilder’s life and thought. Not only is this a typically contemporary emphasis reflecting Schilder’s own trajectory from a working class boy on his way to a professorate, a story of the empowerment of the individual (see section 2.1.1); we see also the emphasis on concrete obedience that he proclaimed from the pulpit, the tension of the Sermon on the Mount that should characterize the life of every Christian individual. In the next period, this individual line will return in Schilder’s notion of the covenant (see section 4.2.3). Paradoxically, the covenant is a communal category. The way Schilder unpacks the notion gives it an individual twist with its strong emphasis on human responsibility. For the covenant is for Schilder, as I already explained, an incentive par excellence for the individual. The covenant shows how seriously God takes the individual human being. In the covenant God gives his promises and demands. The covenant is the theological locus where the tension between the communal and the individual is most vivid. And the covenant, as I will argue, will be filled with notions that Schilder now applies to the church.

Schilder’s idea of what it means for a church to be a faithful church is best understood between the two poles of the church as institution and the dynamic church. We have now seen how Schilder in this period understands the first side

¹⁴⁵Ortega y Gasset, *La rebelion de las masas*.

¹⁴⁶Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, p. 281.

¹⁴⁷“Maar de spanning die er ligt tusschen het voortdurend conflict met de wereld, en het nooit mogen gaan uit de wereld, zal slechts dáár gevonden zijn, waar de *persoonlijkheid* steeds weer het ambt bij God vervult en daaruit mandaat ontleent voor de eigen cultuurtaak; waar de individu in de (kerk)-gemeenschap *persoonlijk* ‘aangesproken’ werd, levend en krachtig” (Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, p. 282).

of the tension, that the church is to be understood primarily as the concrete, visible, historical institution with a clear confession as its banner. Although this betrays an emphasis on the church as community, I have shown that this communal, Hauerwasian idea is balanced by a strong individual emphasis in Schilder's doctrine of the church.

3.3.3 Dynamic Church

The second strand in Schilder's thought, which represents the second pole of the tension I indicated above, is his notion of the dynamic church.¹⁴⁸ Most ideas developed by Schilder have to be understood in a particular context. For the dynamic aspect of the church, this context is formed by the debate over the pluriformity of the church. In the previous chapter, I described the debate and noted how Schilder remained on the sidelines at the time. In this new period, that changes drastically. The fiercest polemics in which Schilder got himself involved were precisely those on pluriformity, especially in the next period of his life when the polemics degenerated into little less than an intellectual kind of trench warfare. The debates on pluriformity, and Schilder's position in particular, should also be understood against the backdrop of the ecumenical movement which developed from 1910 onwards into the foundation of the World Council of Churches in 1948. Before I explain Schilder's view on the dynamic aspect of the church, I will provide a brief description of that wider backdrop.

The ecumenical movement The first decades of the twentieth century saw the birth of the ecumenical movement. The World Council of Churches (1948) had its roots in the 1910 Missions Conference in Edinburgh, from which two early ecumenical movements issued: the Stockholm Conference on Life and Work in 1925, and the Lausanne Conference on Faith and Order in 1927. Anglicans and Swedish Lutherans played a major role in both these conferences, but many Orthodox and Protestant churches (including the *Gereformeerde Kerken*) were also present there. The Roman Catholic Church was conspicuous by its absence.¹⁴⁹ The great disappointment of the First World War fueled the desire for peace

¹⁴⁸The word 'dynamic' appears regularly in Schilder's oeuvre, and is sometimes also applied to the church (see, e.g., Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 232). The description of Schilder's ecclesiology as 'dynamic' occurs for the first time as a criticism in Richel, *Het kerkbegrip van Calvijn*, pp. 96-73, and then positively in, for example, Dee, *Schilder oecumenicus*, pp. 124-132, 189-191 and Buys, *Sodat hulle een kan wees*, p. 285.

¹⁴⁹G. Harinck and L. Winkeler. "De twintigste eeuw". In: *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*. Ed. by H. Selderhuis. 3rd ed. Utrecht: Kok, 2014, pp. 735-928, pp. 792-793.

and unity among churches, and especially a united witness in word and deed.¹⁵⁰ The conference similarly stated that its official aim was “to unite the different churches in common practical work, to furnish the Christian conscience with an organ of expression in the midst of the great spiritual movements of our time”.¹⁵¹

The ecumenical spirit of the age encouraged by the Great War could also be felt in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. In a series entitled ‘International Calvinism’, published in *De Reformatie* in 1925, Valentijn Hepp pleads for more international cooperation among Calvinists: “But we, who breathe in the stifling post-war air, experience that the blood of the battlefields does not stitch together, but tears apart [...] How to reach each other over the sea of blood? – Such is the mystery over which brains are being racked these days.”¹⁵² The *Gereformeerde Kerken* took a critical stance towards the broader Ecumenical Conferences. There the theology was “modernist” and “humanistic”, and not “orthodox” as in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.¹⁵³ These conferences were not built on Calvinist confessions, and as such unsuitable for properly organizing International Calvinism. Hepp understands international calvinism in the Kuyperian sense as a worldview, a universal cultural force, that is, as more than just the church. In his famous Stone Lectures, Kuyper had spoken of Calvinism as the most developed and promising religion and worldview, as virtually an Hegelian evolution of previous, lower forms.¹⁵⁴ This is what Hepp reiterates here: “International Calvinism intends to be a life-encompassing global movement”.¹⁵⁵ He sought a gathering not on the basis of a church, but rather Calvinist principles (*beginnselen*). Hepp’s ideal was not without romanticism and a spirit of partisanship as he applauded the suggestion to buy Calvin’s former house with the league of international Calvinists.¹⁵⁶ The realization of Hepp’s ecumenical ideal was ironically delayed

¹⁵⁰See, e.g., the opening address given by bishop F.T. Woods at the Stockholm Conference. There the War as the end of the nineteenth century is a clear motive that fuels the desire to repent and unite the churches (G. K. A. Bell, ed. *The Stockholm Conference 1925; the Official Report of the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work Held in Stockholm, 19-30 August, 1925*. London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1926, pp. 39-45).

¹⁵¹Bell, *The Stockholm Conference 1925*, p. 1.

¹⁵²“Maar wij, die ademen in een benauwende naoorlogsche sfeer, ondervinden het, dat het bloed der slagvelden niet hecht, maar openrijt; [...] Hoe over de bloedzee heen elkander te bereiken, zietdaar het raadsel, waarover men zich thans het hoofd breekt.” (“Internationaal Calvinisme I” in: *De Reformatie* 6-1, p. 1 (October 2, 1925)).

¹⁵³V. Hepp, “De boodschap van Stockholm” in: *De Reformatie* 5-50, p. 361 (September 11, 1925).

¹⁵⁴Kuyper, *Het Calvinisme*, p. 168, *ET Kuyper, Calvinism*, p. 231. See also A. Molendijk. “Neocalvinistisch cultuurprotestantisme. Abraham Kuyper’s Stone Lectures”. In: *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* 29.65 (2006), pp. 5–19.

¹⁵⁵“Internationaal Calvinisme IV” in: *De Reformatie* 6-6, p. 37 (November 6, 1925).

¹⁵⁶“Het Calvinistisch Congres in Zuid-Afrika II” in: *De Reformatie* 10-8, p. 57 (November

by the crisis and schism around Geelkerken that haunted the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. But by the end of 1929 the “*Bond van Gereformeerden (Calvinisten) in Nederland*” (League of Reformed (Calvinists) in the Netherlands) was a fact. On the list of participants featured many prominent ministers and professors from the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, and the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*, as well as the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Hersteld Verband* which had issued from the recent schism.¹⁵⁷ Hepp finally had his “worthy counterpart to Stockholm and Lausanne”.¹⁵⁸

On the same pages where Hepp set forth his ideas on International Calvinism, the first traits of Schilder’s critique on both Hepp’s league of Calvinists and on the broader ecumenical movement can implicitly be found. While Hepp relativizes the role of the church in his idea on international Calvinism, Schilder brings it to the fore. In his article, Schilder offers a powerful defence for the church against those who relativize its importance with regard to personal faith.¹⁵⁹ The pursuit for what Schilder thought to be true unity in the church would even become one of the most prominent objects of his theological and journalistic work. The fiercest of Schilder’s polemics are those on the pluriformity of the church with Hepp and other advocates of the *Calvinistenbond*. The tensions that emerged from these polemics were, paradoxically, among the causes leading to Schilder’s eventual dismissal and the consequent schism in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. For him, perhaps more than for any of his contemporaries, the unity of the church was important to the point of devouring him. This restless pursuit only makes sense against the backdrop of Schilder’s understanding of the “high tension” of the Sermon of the Mount that defines the church. The epitaph Schilder wished for was the text from John 17: “That they may be one”. In 1952 it was that text which they engraved on his tombstone (J. J. C. Dee. *Picturalia: fotobiografie K. Schilder*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1990, p. 143). This same text was the topic for the opening sermon of the Lausanne Conference given by Charles Brent.¹⁶⁰ It also features prominently in the opening paragraph of a book on Christian unity by Nathan Soderblom, one of the pioneers of the ecumenical movement.¹⁶¹ In his dedication to what

22, 1929).

¹⁵⁷W. G. de Vries. *Calvinisten op de tweesprong: de Internationale Federatie van Calvinisten en haar invloed op de onderlinge verhoudingen in de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in de dertiger jaren van de twintigste eeuw*. Groningen: De Vuurbaak, 1974, pp. 25-26, 50-51.

¹⁵⁸“Wij hebben een waardig tegenhanger te toonen van Stockholm en Lausanne.” (“Het Calvinistisch Congres in Zuid-Afrika III” in: *De Reformatie* 10-9, p. 65 (November, 29 1929)).

¹⁵⁹“Het allerjongste vonnis” in: *De Reformatie* 5-50, p. 363-364 (September 11, 1925).

¹⁶⁰H. N. Bate, ed. *Faith and Order: Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927*. London: Student Christian Movement, 1927, p. 3.

¹⁶¹N. Söderblom. *De ware broederschap*. Trans. by A. Norel and O. Norel. Amsterdam: W. Ten Have, 1926, p. 1.

he believed to be true ecumenicity and in his opposition to the ecumenical movement, Schilder proved to be a child of his time.

Pluriformity Polemics Schilder's ecumenical contribution came to primary expression in his fierce criticism on the Kuyperian idea of the pluriformity of the church. As I described in the previous chapter (2.2.4), this topic was also the subject of prominent debate during the first few years of the twentieth century, and the synodical decision of 1920 had failed to quench the fire. A few decades later, Schilder was eager to add some fuel. He was hostile to the idea of pluriformity, arguing that this understanding of the Belgic Confession did not make any sense. According to Schilder, the Kuyperian concept merely served as a means to escape God's urgent call for a united church, as expressed in John 17. At this point, it is good to note that Schilder's criticism is directed more at contemporary Kuyperians than Kuyper himself. Historically, this is true because Schilder had a decided preference for polemics with the living than the dead. It is also true theologically, in the sense that Kuyper's view is more nuanced than the image Schilder creates of it.¹⁶² In matters of the church in particular, vagueness and division have the most terrible consequences.¹⁶³ In the church one should not be quietistic, as Schilder likes to call it, but live in the tension of God's commands in his Word: "If the fact of the pluriformity of the church is taken as an excuse to acquiesce passively in the growing number of churches, or as an abandonment of the struggle to realize a pure understanding of the church, then one has lost and builds one's medical science on a disease, instead of discerning the disease from the state of health", Schilder writes in 1928.¹⁶⁴ In other words, God's will for our situation, rather than the actual situation as tainted by sin, should guide us in matters of ecclesiology.

This quote gives insight into a flaw in theological method Schilder thought to discern in the doctrine of the church's pluriformity. In matters of theology we should never argue from what we see, but from what we believe. What we should believe is revealed to us in God's Word. Kuyper's construction of the pluriformity of the church is based on the observation that there are many

¹⁶²See Bruijne, "Colony of Heaven", p. 469, who writes: "All this should not be considered as a relativization of the problematic character of the church's dividedness, of which Kuyper has been accused." On the other hand, De Bruijne quotes Kuyper saying that the "defective and imperfect character of our situations" needs to be taken into account, which is exactly the element Schilder will subject to criticism.

¹⁶³Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 61-100.

¹⁶⁴"Wordt het feit van de pluriformiteit der kerk aangegrepen als excuus voor het passief berusten in het feit van vermeerdering van het aantal kerken of in een opgeven van den strijd om het zuivere kerkbegrip te realiseren, dan verliest men en bouwt zijn gezondheidsleer op uit een ziektebeeld, inplaats van de ziekte te kennen uit de leer der gezondheid." (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 48-49).

different churches that have the appearance of true churches according to the standards of the confession. This, however, is in itself an irrelevant observation for the formulation of a doctrine on the church. "Do we have twelve or eleven articles of faith?", is the rhetorical question that serves as the title to an article on this matter.¹⁶⁵ The doctrine of the Trinity and creation are not derived from empirical observation, but from faith in God's revelation. We should do likewise with the church, Schilder insists. And then we will see that there can only be one church: "I think that maintaining the confession that everyone is obliged to join the true church is much more powerful. If I believe that, I have plenty of work to do."¹⁶⁶

Noteworthy here is the parallel with Schilder's developing critique of common grace (see section 3.4.1 below). Here too Schilder sees the same methodological flaw at work. Common grace is an empirical doctrine, while doctrine should never be empirical but derived from Scripture. Rather than common grace, so Schilder argues, one should speak of common mandate.¹⁶⁷ Rather than praising the pluriformity of the church, one should strive to realize God's call for a united church. At this point it is important to note that Schilder, as he does with common grace, does not abandon the ideas behind the doctrine all together. The pluriformity of the church is completely appropriate if we understand it as pluriformity within the true church.¹⁶⁸ Yet the idea of pluriformity is a far too static understanding of the church. The church should always dynamically move in the direction of Christ. And given John 17, that direction must be one of unity. An idea like that of the pluriformity of the church, which only restrains this motion, must be a bad one.

In this emphasis we recognize the earlier Schilder's 'all or nothing'-approach to revelation (see 2.2.2). In that context, I had indicated that this dialectical element in Schilder would increasingly place him in opposition to Kuyper. His critique on pluriformity is the first in this, his critique on common grace the second. In both, Kuyper's 'empirical approach' forms an essential part of the critique. Schilder advocates a more Barthian approach from faith alone, without a point of connection. Furthermore, in Schilder's emphasis on a theology on the basis of faith rather than sight, his dynamic ecclesiology is fully part of his understanding of the church's connection to Christ through the Word of God. It is the Word of God alone that matters when it comes to the church. In that sense, Jos Dee is right to call Schilder's emphasis on the church as a matter

¹⁶⁵Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 150-154.

¹⁶⁶"Meer kracht schijnt mij gelegen in de handhaving van de belijdenis, dat ieder schuldig is zich tot de ware kerk te voegen. Als ik dat geloof, heb ik tenminste nog werk voorlopig." (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 150).

¹⁶⁷Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", pp. 277-278.

¹⁶⁸Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 123.

of faith, “the beginning and end of all that he wrote on the church.”¹⁶⁹ Dee, as well as Jaap Kamphuis, have difficulties admitting the dialectical element in Schilder’s theology as noted by both Gerrit Berkouwer and Piet Richel.¹⁷⁰ They were indeed right to read both Richel and Berkouwer with some suspicion. Richel’s dissertation, written under the supervision of Hepp, clearly functioned as a weapon in the polemics between Hepp and Schilder, where the depiction of Schilder as a Barthian was a welcome line of attack. So too Kamphuis is correct to note that Berkouwer draws Schilder into a framework that is ultimately alien to him.¹⁷¹ That suspicion, however, prevents both Dee and Kamphuis from appreciating what in my view is clearly there: that Schilder’s critique on Kuyper has a Barthian hue.¹⁷² Neither Dee and Kamphuis, nor Berkouwer and Richel, interpreted Schilder free of contemporary ecclesial interests. In the case of Dee and Kamphuis, this interest amounted to a defence of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*. This part of the reception of Schilder’s thought serves as a clear indication of the way his polemical nature cast its shadow over decades of reception of his thought.

Schilder’s polemics on the issue were aimed in different directions. One of them was the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*.¹⁷³ This is an emphasis that dates back to the early Schilder in his criticism of the A and B divisions within his church, as we saw it in the previous chapter. The *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*, as noted there, was increasingly attracting people from the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. This made the topic for Schilder an all the more pressing one. For him, the thought that two churches coexisted in division, while having exactly the same confession, was unbearable. He kept urging these people to return to the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, arguing that their separation was unnecessary and therefore sinful.¹⁷⁴

Dynamic church Schilder’s pluriformity polemics, which would grow to become a key topic within his oeuvre over the course of the 1930s, have only relative relevance for our inquiry into his conception of what it means to be a faithful church. This relevance is clear in that this critique is a clear expression of how vital the concrete and visible institution of the church in submission to the Word of God is for him. The main purpose of my exposition of Schilder’s

¹⁶⁹Dee, *Schilder oecumenicus*, p. 121.

¹⁷⁰Richel, *Het kerkbegrip van Calvijn*, pp. 178-179 and G. C. Berkouwer, *Een halve eeuw theologie: motieven en stromingen van 1920 tot heden*. Kampen: Kok, 1974, pp. 64-66.

¹⁷¹Jaap Kamphuis, “Credo Ecclesiam” in: *De Reformatie* 46-6, p. November 7, 1970 (48).

¹⁷²Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, pp. 317-318 and Jaap Kamphuis, “Schilder-Kuitert-Wiskerke” in: *De Reformatie* 46-5, p. October 31, 1970 (38-39).

¹⁷³Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 61-100.

¹⁷⁴See for such polemics Schilder, *VWKerk I*: “Persoonlijke kijk en ons aller ABC” (1932) en “Over kerk en kerken” (1932), “Voor en tegen” (1933), “Zeggen en doen zijn twee” (1933).

pluriformity critique, however, was to introduce Schilder's idea of the dynamic church.

In 1932 Schilder develops this idea for the first time in an article entitled "The comparative method: why 'still' is a disastrous word".¹⁷⁵ In this article, Schilder identifies the same methodological flaw he had also detected in the notion of the pluriformity of the church, namely an empirical approach to doctrine. An empirical approach leads to the identification of "what is still left" of the marks of the church in a particular church. This is not what the marks are intended for: "The marks of the church should never be isolated from the living, present, contemporary, daily renewing, dynamic act of the exalted Christ."¹⁷⁶ Because Christ is actively congregating his church, this church is unfinished. Judging a particular church by how much is 'still' left of the marks represents a misguided understanding of the marks. The question should not be whether we can 'still' call this church a church, "on the contrary, one should ask with fear and trembling: where is the living Christ going?"¹⁷⁷ The marks of the church are not a measuring tool, but a law everyone has to obey. The church is not like a tree that will still be called a tree, even when it is planted in a bad place by an erring person. Rather, Schilder writes, the church is like an ocean wave. And when a wave is put in a tube, it is no longer a wave.¹⁷⁸

Thus, when Schilder speaks about the concrete and visible historical institution, this institution is by way of principle always unfinished and open to the future. This institution is a wave that flows through history. As such it is very concrete, tangible, and visible, as well as always subject to where its head, the living exalted Christ, is leading it. Informed by his dynamic emphasis, Schilder's approach is contextual and provisional. Christ "goes both to the Netherlands and to Russia; and the church in the Netherlands can be gathered in a very different way than it is in Russia."¹⁷⁹ Schilder even writes: "I do not even believe that a church has to be Reformed in order to be the true church in that place. Otherwise, I could see no institution in Russia or Turkey where Christ is doing something."¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁵"De vergelijkende methode. Het funeste woordje 'nog'" in: *De Reformatie* 13-3, p. 18-19 (October 21, 1932). Reprinted in Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 202-210.

¹⁷⁶Men mag de 'kenmerken' der kerk (statische gegevens, zodra ze geïsoleerd zouden zijn) niet isoleren van de levende, presente, actuele, uit den hemel tot de aarde komende, dagelijks zich vernieuwende dynamische DAAD van den verhoogden Christus. Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 205.

¹⁷⁷"Men moet integendeel met vreze en beven vragen: waarheen trekt de levende Christus?" (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 206).

¹⁷⁸Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 207.

¹⁷⁹"gaat Hij zowel naar Nederland als naar Rusland; vandaar, dat in Nederland een kerk door Hem vergaderd worden kan op heel andere manier dan in Rusland" (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 206).

¹⁸⁰"Ik meen niet eens, dat een kerk 'gereformeerd' moet zijn, om in een bepaald plekje van de wereld aldáár de ware te heten; anders zou ik in Rusland, Turkije, geen instituut kunnen zien,

The idea of the dynamic church balances Schilder's emphasis on the church as visible institution. As Berkouwer already remarked in 1970, the judgment of ecclesial absolutism fails to incorporate the dynamic aspect of Schilder's view on the church.¹⁸¹ However, it reveals, as I have already indicated, a tension within Schilder's thought that will keep raising its head. Also in the period following the *Vrijmaking* of 1944, during which Schilder's ideas are taking shape in a concrete practice, when the metaphorical house is not only constructed but also inhabited by actual people, this tension becomes almost unbearable (see section 5.2.3). We see Schilder himself placing greater accent on the dynamic aspects of the church when other voices lean towards ecclesial absolutism. The schism in the late sixties that was to occur in 'Schilder's church' after his death is, as I will argue, a parting of the ways between precisely these two poles of Schilder's thought.

I have already repeatedly emphasized the unity of Schilder's work, and this applies to the idea of the dynamic church as well. It is the continuation of an element from the previous period: the obedience of the church. Berkouwer coined the term 'critical ecclesiology' for Schilder's thought in his early years.¹⁸² This critical element, the lightning and thunder of his early sermons and his stress on obedience, develops in the dynamic element in the early thirties.¹⁸³ It is the dialectical side of Schilder that survives the deep encounter with and criticism of Barth around the 1926 synod and finds itself opposed to his Kuyperian heritage.

My view is that there is a tension between the dynamic and the historical in Schilder's work. Schilder himself did not believe this tension to be problematic. Later he was to call this the tension that is characteristic of the covenant, the tension between divine and human action that come together.¹⁸⁴ Above I also pointed to the early Kierkegaardian emphasis on the Christian life as a tension in itself. Applied to the church as well, Schilder saw no problem. He can, for example, write that "the Spirit of God really does want to have his stream flow through the bed of the institute of the lawful church."¹⁸⁵ Dee also finds that "the historical and the dynamic are complementary".¹⁸⁶ Buys suggests the same, and prefers to speak of a "dynamic-historical" ecclesiology to cover both elements.¹⁸⁷

waarin Christus iets deed;" (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 208-209). See also Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 161, for similar emphases.

¹⁸¹Berkouwer, *De Kerk I*, pp. 19-23. (*ET* Berkouwer, *The Church*, pp. 19-23).

¹⁸²Berkouwer, *Zoeken en vinden*, pp. 246-248.

¹⁸³Smit, "Gehoorzamen: achter Christus aan! Schilder over de kerk", p. 73, remarks that the dynamic aspect is a relatively late development that started in the early 1930s. While that is technically true, I also believe that the dynamic grows out of Schilder's early, critical ecclesiology.

¹⁸⁴Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 415.

¹⁸⁵"dat de Geest Gods wel degelijk zijn stroom wil laten lopen door de bedding van het wettig kerkinstituut" (Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 415).

¹⁸⁶Dee, *Schilder oecumenicus*, p. 189.

¹⁸⁷Buys, *Sodat hulle een kan wees*, pp. 285-286.

Veenhof notes that “the dynamic motif is in its operation slowed down by his view that there can only be one church in one place.”¹⁸⁸ These interpretations suggest a synthesis, but in so doing acknowledge an existing tension.

A deeper look into Schilder's thought as it will unfold in the next chapter (see section 4.3.1 in particular) reveals how this tension could exist for Schilder. Already in this period, the dynamic motif is more than just his pluriformity polemics. Buys makes the connection between the idea of ongoing revelation, which we have also discussed above, and Schilder's dynamic ecclesiology.¹⁸⁹ Both notions indeed suggest that the Christian life, and even our knowledge of God, are an ongoing, dynamic process. I have already noted that Schilder advocated a dynamic confession: The confession is always subject to change if insights from Scripture demand it. This fact did not lead Schilder to a relativization of the confession. On the contrary, the confession was for him *the* hallmark of the church. Schilder himself captured this sentiment well when he wrote: “A mistake in the confession is ‘a’ mistake. *No* confession, however, is *the* mistake.”¹⁹⁰ Another relevant element here is Schilder's theory of polemics. Polemics were not simply a practice for him; rather, he was deeply convinced that they had to be performed. Polemics are part of the dynamic tension of the Christian life, and an aid in approaching the truth more closely.¹⁹¹ Here one might also recall Schilder's emphasis on the unicity, the ‘once-ness’ (*eenmaligheid*) of history.¹⁹² Every moment of history has to be judged according to its unicity, the fact that it happens only once. Schilder used this as rule of thumb for biblical exegesis, but also to advance the value of history against dialectical theology. Again, the thrust is the *praesentia salutis*. Schilder's dynamic ecclesiology is part of a fundamental view on the dynamics of the Christian life. The ‘here and now’ is what is decisive in this view, without a worry about how it differs from yesterday and tomorrow. In the next chapter, I will demonstrate how this comes together in Schilder's view on the relationship between God and world (see. section 4.3.1). It is no coincidence that Schilder often speaks of the Spirit of God when it comes to this dynamic motif. It would be worthwhile considering the significance of this connection between church and Spirit in

¹⁸⁸J. Veenhof. “Geschiedenis van theologie en spiritualiteit in de Gereformeerde Kerken”. In: *100 jaar theologie: aspecten van een eeuw theologie in de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (1892-1992)*. Ed. by M. E. Brinkman. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1992, pp. 14-95, p. 48.

¹⁸⁹Buys, *Sodat bulle een kan wees*, p. 56.

¹⁹⁰“Want een fout in de belijdenis is ‘een’ fout. Maar *niet*-belijden, dat is *de* fout. Schilder, *Tussen ja en neen*, p. 377.

¹⁹¹See K. Schilder. “Ds. K Schilder aan Buskes, Oegstgeest, 10 juni 1926”. In: *Brieven Aan Buskes*. Ed. by J. de Bruijn. Donum Reeks. Amsterdam: Historisch Documentatiecentrum voor het Nederlands Protestantisme, 1990, p. 18, Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 70 and Schilder, *Ons aller moeder*, p. 6.

¹⁹²Schilder, *VWSchrift I*, pp. 441-449.

Schilder's thought, even if it cannot be pursued in greater detail here.¹⁹³

3.4 Public Church

The story about the church is a story about the world, Schilder writes in "Coetus et Congregatio". In the previous section, we saw how the emphasis Schilder places on the objective, communal character of the church has everything to do with this statement. This objective church is an absolute necessity for the world. Thus far, however, Schilder's emphasis has been on the way to keep the church 'pure' and to maintain its character as a church of Christ. How is the story of the church the story of the world? How is the church, as Schilder often calls it, a "broad church", and what does that mean? How does Schilder prevent the church from becoming a private sect of schismatics or the secluded safe haven of the mystics?

3.4.1 Christ and Culture

Before I turn to the specific role of the church in the world, we first need insight into the larger picture of Schilder's view on culture undergirding it. In the previous chapter, we saw that Schilder still operated largely within the framework of common grace as it was developed in the Kuyperian tradition. I also demonstrated that the tone and air of Schilder's cultural theology appear far more dialectical than Kuyperian, thus anticipating his later critique on common grace. In this period, especially in the essay that is the predecessor to Schilder's most influential work, *Christ and culture*, this critique becomes increasingly visible. What also becomes increasingly clear is Schilder's theology of culture. The contours of the house are therefore taking shape.

In 1932 Schilder was asked to write an article with the title "Jesus Christ and cultural life" as part of a collection of essays.¹⁹⁴ Due to a lack of time, Schilder was able to offer what was, in his own view, little more than a hastily written article with little reflection that he was quite unhappy with himself, especially for the many open ends and immaturity.¹⁹⁵ Nonetheless, this article did lay down the cultural program that he would continue to defend throughout his life. In 1948 he published an updated and extended version of this article as a small book under the title *Christ and Culture*.¹⁹⁶ While there are some developments to which we will turn in a later chapter (see section 5.3), the essential core, which evoked harsh criticism from the likes of the *Hervormde* theologians Oepke

¹⁹³Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 409.

¹⁹⁴Schilder, "Jesus Christus en het cultuurleven".

¹⁹⁵Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, p. 245.

¹⁹⁶Schilder, *Christus en cultuur*.

Noordmans and Heiko Miskotte, remained untouched. In this article, Schilder seeks to continue the cultural emancipation of the Reformed orthodox people of his tradition in line with Abraham Kuyper. But Schilder at the same time gives evidence of a growing hesitation towards the Kuyperian enterprise. This is the question Schilder asks himself in the introduction:

Must we as Christians take action in this world and its culture in the way of reform and revolt? Or have we been given only the limited task of somehow forcing our way though the rapid currents of that entire motley variety of life in this world in order that we might afterwards thank God that our little vessel just escaped being wrecked in the surging of the breakers? Or is there a positive task for us as Christians? Does “following Jesus” then indeed signify no less than the tireless actualizing of a God-given creative capacity that enables us to produce a distinctively Christian culture with world-conquering propensities?¹⁹⁷

Schilder discerns an antithetical relationship on the one hand, and a reconciliatory approach on the other, as well as the Kuyperian approach, which is to “uphold God’s honor in all spheres of life, hence also in cultural life”.¹⁹⁸ Schilder’s answer to the question begins by rephrasing the problem and challenging the distinction undergirding it. For he considers the distinction between Christ and culture to be an unhelpful abstraction. How culture should be defined always remains unclear: “There is no such thing as cultural life [...] These are abstractions. It is the acts that matter for you and me. Work is being done”, Schilder writes.¹⁹⁹ Culture then, Schilder proposes, should be understood from creation, from the first and second chapters of Genesis. God created the world with the purpose of its unfolding, its development. This unfolding is done by God himself, but never without human beings as God’s co-workers. This purpose of God and humanity’s role in it is made explicit in the commands

¹⁹⁷“Moeten wij als christenen in de wereld met “haar” cultuur reformeerend, revolteerend, optreden? Of hebben wij niet meer dan deze bescheiden taak, dat wij ons zoo goed en zoo kwaad, als het gaat, door den versnelden stroom van het bonte wereldleven heenslaan, om dan, aan het einde gekomen, God te danken, dat ons scheepje in de branding nog nèt niet verging? Of ligt er een positieve taak voor ons christenen gegeven, en beteekent het “achter Jezus aankomen” dus niet minder dan de onvermoeide actualisering van een uit God ons gegeven scheppend vermogen tot een *eigen* christelijke cultuur, met wereld-veroverende tendenzen.?” (Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, pp. 230-231).

¹⁹⁸“dat de christen Gods eer handhaven moet ‘op alle terreinen van het leven’, dus ook van ‘het cultuurleven’.” (Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, p. 232).

¹⁹⁹“Een (het) cultuurleven bestaat niet, zeiden wij. [...] Al deze woorden zijn maar abstracties. Er zijn voor u en mij slechts daden in ons leven. Er wordt gewerkt.” (Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, p. 272).

God gives to “till the garden”, to “be fruitful and multiply”, and to “subdue the earth and have dominion”.²⁰⁰ This is the “ABC of order for life and for the world: To serve God in the concrete realities of life, to obey God in all functions of life.”²⁰¹

Sin, however, came and broke the possibility of this mandate. Sin, Schilder argues, is disintegration, specialization, and fragmentation: religion and culture became two. But after the fall, Christ acted as the savior of the world. And history was prolonged for his sake. Christ is the one who restores this original mandate. He is the “perfect, beautiful, ideal human being”, who can be a true co-worker of God in the unfolding and evolution of his creation. And in doing so Christ bestows his Spirit so that every human being can participate in that restored cooperation with the Creator. That renewed eternal life starts here in this world. Culture becomes possible again through Christ. In Christ, and only in Christ, there are once again pure human beings, not yet in perfection, but still in principle. For Schilder culture is christological, and sanctification is cultural. Christ’s salvation is all about God’s initial plan before the fall. That is why Christ’s last parable before his suffering is about the talents (Matthew 25:14ff), Schilder asserts. History is about “taking out of the world all that it has in it”.²⁰²

This then implies that the Christian acts in all spheres of life from his divine mandate. In Christ, the Christian can restore the unity between religion and culture. This means according to Schilder that Paul was an example of high culture in corrupt Rome, just like a Christian family is another example over against Hollywood. Strictly speaking, only what is Christian is culture. There alone is participation in the Christian renewal of God’s original mandate to cultivate and develop creation. Outside of Christ’s sanctification there is only destruction and fragmentation.²⁰³

It may seem as if Schilder is depicting the Christian life as a cultural endeavor. Indeed, he says that forsaking culture means forsaking Christ. However, exceptional circumstances demand exceptional measures. Schilder opens the possibility for abstinence as an emergency measure, a kind of ‘Benedict Option’.²⁰⁴ Abstinence is often sin, but it can be a deed of heroic obedience of “self-

²⁰⁰“Bebouwt den hof [...] Weest vruchtbaar en vermenigvuldigt u [...] Onderwerpt de aarde, en hebt heerschappij.” (Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, p. 256). Schilder is quoting Genesis 1:28 here.

²⁰¹“het abc der levens- en der wereld-orde. God dienen, in het concrete leven, God gehoorzamen in alle functies van het leven” (Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, p. 249).

²⁰²Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, p. 252.

²⁰³Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, p. 262.

²⁰⁴R. Dreher. *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*. New York: Sentinel, 2017, passim.

culture".²⁰⁵ The motive is decisive here: Abstinence as an end in itself is always shirking your duty, but abstinence in favor of higher priorities is sometimes necessary. Schilder evokes the eschatological climate that characterized his earlier work, including an explicit reference to Revelation 12.²⁰⁶ There are times of war, times to flee to the desert. As a concrete example Schilder mentions the movie theatre. The non-Christian "offers" his money to the movies and not to the church, to mission, or to Christian education. This burdens the Christian with a disproportional load, and might imply that the Christian abstains from organizing Christian theatre, for example. For Schilder theatre and movies are apparently on a lower scale compared to mission and education. The point is that choices will have to be made, and priorities set. As such, abstinence may be a legitimate option.²⁰⁷

The above may give the impression that Schilder is arguing for a very strict antithesis, a complete and radical separation between the church and the world. But this is not what he means. He already feels himself that it is too blunt simply to state that "only what is done according to God's will can be called culture".²⁰⁸ Schilder relativizes this by introducing the category of deceleration (*retardatie*). For in history, both curse and grace are slowed down. It is not until the eschaton that all will be fulfilled. History has not yet split into heaven and hell. Through this deceleration, there is a remnant-culture, remnants of the image of God, also outside of the believers' work. Neither pagans nor believers will ever be able to finish their cultural work. No one will achieve more than truncated pyramids.²⁰⁹

There is another reason why Schilder's proposal does not entail a radical separation between the church and the world, which also forms an important difference with respect to Kuyper. In Kuyper, we find traces of an ideal of re-Christianization of the nation and even of Europe as a whole.²¹⁰ Although Schilder would not find that ideal as such problematic, it does not seem to be on his mind.²¹¹ He does not spell out in very concrete terms what he means

²⁰⁵Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", p. 276.

²⁰⁶See "Vluchten en vliegen" in Schilder, *Licht in den rook*!, pp. 25-31.

²⁰⁷Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", pp. 273-277.

²⁰⁸"Wij zeiden immers boven, dat, strikt genomen, de naam „cultuur" alleen dáár paste, waar weer gebouwd werd, en gewerkt werd, overeenkomstig Gods wil. Deze uitspraak zal velen te kras schijnen. Wij geven dan ook onmiddellijk toe, dat zij een aanvulling nodig heeft." (Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", p. 264).

²⁰⁹Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", pp. 265-270.

²¹⁰See for example Kuyper, *Het Calvinisme*, pp. 156-183 (*ET* Kuyper, *Calvinism*) and also Kuyper, *Gemeene gratie II*, pp. 245-283 (*ET* Kuyper, *Common Grace 2*).

²¹¹Here again, the image of Kuyper is nuanced, as argued in Bruijne, "Colony of Heaven", pp. 454-459. Kuyper saw his own proposals as contextual, and often wondered whether the Antichrist's coming was not closer than he would otherwise think. Kuyper at least at some point expected the coming of the Antichrist, the persecution of the church, and the end of Christian public engagement.

by the shaping of a Christian culture. When he does address it, however, the examples are always taken from the mundane realities of everyday life: “We have to serve God. Everyone in his own way, in apron or toga – that does not matter. Everyone in his own way.”²¹² That Paul calls Christians God’s ‘co-workers’ “is not merely a text for an inaugural sermon, it is the daily verse for every cultural laborer, professor, and sewage worker, for anyone who cooks in the kitchen or has to write a *Moonlight Sonata*.”²¹³ When Schilder praises Calvin for developing a Christian culture, he notes a parallel with the way Calvin values the professions. As examples Schilder then mentions the local church weekly, the laborer, and the family.²¹⁴ In short, Christian culture does not mean for Schilder a cultural program of developing a new Christendom, but is rather intended to bring a deep theological value to everyone’s simple or complex daily task, whether within or outside of the church.²¹⁵

In Schilder’s article, earlier undeveloped traits come to fruition. His cultural program is on the one hand a modern radicalization of Kuyper’s cultural enterprise, and at the same time more dialectical and reserved in its nature. This twofold tendency in Schilder’s theology of culture is best illustrated in the fierce criticism offered by two contemporaries. Heiko Miskotte, a well-known *Hervormde* pastor with Barthian sympathies, published a scathing review of the collection as a whole, but was particularly critical of Schilder’s contribution: “I cannot stand to read this. To speak like this is an astonishing lack of reverence, it is nearly blasphemous”.²¹⁶ Miskotte read Schilder as a shameless theology of glory, with a complete disregard for the consequences of sin. The will for culture dominates theology, and the cross-bearing aspect of Christian life is abandoned. The ideal man is already present, and there is no eschatological reser-

²¹²“Wij moeten God dienen. Ieder op zijn eigen manier, met het schootsvel voor, of in de toga — dat doet er niet toe. Elk in het zijne.” (Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, pp. 272-273).

²¹³“Het is geen intree-tekst voor een dominé alleen, maar het is de dagtekst ook voor elken cultuurarbeider, voor professor en putjesschepper, voor wie in de keuken braden moet en voor wie een Mondschein-Sonate heeft te schrijven.” (Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, p. 255).

²¹⁴Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, p. 263.

²¹⁵See Veenhof, “Medewerkers van God”, pp. 151-153, who argues similarly that Schilder’s intention was to create a connection between work in its broadest sense, including voluntary work, and creation. All work, paid or unpaid, inside and outside the church, is cooperation with God. See also N. H. Gootjes. “Schilder on the Christ and Culture”. In: *Always Obedient: Essays on the Teachings of Dr. Klaas Schilder*. Ed. by J. Geertsema. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995, pp. 35–64, pp. 50-53, who sees Schilder’s high esteem for daily work as the main significance of his views on culture. H. van den Belt. “Uit de akker halen wat er in zit: Zelfontplooiing als roeping bij Klaas Schilder”. In: *Kerk en Theologie* 65.1 (2014), pp. 32–39, takes Schilder’s proposal in a similar direction with a creative application to the contemporary notion of self-development (*zelfontplooiing*).

²¹⁶K.H. Miskotte, “Boekbesprekingen” *Onder Eigen Vaandel* 8 (1933), p. 163.

vation whatsoever. Miskotte also disliked Schilder's language, and haughtily wrote: "The language is the pressure gauge of a raging impurity, which at least has its partial origins in the resentment of a culturally backwards group mentality."²¹⁷ Noordmans, another well-respected *Hervormde* pastor-theologian, wrote that while Kuyper's cultural enthusiasm was still limping along, with Schilder it had assumed a firm pace: "Never have I heard modernism enter the church on clogs with greater clarity".²¹⁸ Noordmans, like Miskotte, feared that to cast the significance of Christ in cultural terms was a way to allow natural theology into the church. We can no longer afford to make such a strong connection between creation and re-creation in these times of reviving paganism and modernism, Noordmans explains. Let us not turn the Word into principles. Both Noordmans and Miskotte read Schilder as a radicalization of Kuyper, taken in a wrong direction.²¹⁹

Noordmans and Miskotte were right to see in Schilder a modern radicalization of Kuyper.²²⁰ Aside from Schilder's language, also the deeply individual motive as I have evoked it at several instances above, is indeed a typically modern notion. Even Miskotte's unkind words carry truth in that Schilder's individual cultural program fits his own cultural emancipation (see 2.1.1). Noordmans too was right to note that where for Kuyper the Reformed principles were rooted in Abraham, for Schilder they belonged to creation. For Schilder, re-creation is no more than a restoration of what God established in creation. The significance of Christ is indeed primarily cultural, as can also be seen in Schilder's Christology in "Coetus and Congregatio". The reading of Schilder by his *Hervormde* contemporaries evokes the critical reading of Tom Wright by American evangelicals heralded by John Piper in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Piper feared that the significance of Christ is reduced to a this-worldly emphasis on sanctification, while the significance of the cross as atonement for sins, as justification, is lost.²²¹

Nonetheless, as is true also for Piper with Wright, I believe Noordmans and

²¹⁷"De taal is hier telkens de manometer eener ziedende onzuiverheid, die stellig mede uit ressentiment van cultureel-achterlijk groepsbewustzijn opkomt" (Miskotte, "Boekbesprekingen", p. 168).

²¹⁸"Nimmer het modernisme zo duidelijk op klompen de kerk heb horen binnenstappen." (Puchinger, *Een theologie in discussie*, p. 50).

²¹⁹See also later critiques that echo the concerns of Noordmans and Miskotte in Hepp, *De algemeene genade*, pp. 79-88, Ruler, *Kuyper's idee eener christelijke cultuur*, pp. 15-17 and H. J. D. Smit. "Kerk en organisatie. Motieven en achtergronden: een peiling". In: *Toekomst voor gereformeerde organisaties*. Ed. by H. J. D. Smit. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1994, pp. 35-104, pp. 59-68. See also J. Douma. "Christus en cultuur". In: *K. Schilder: aspecten van zijn werk*. Ed. by J. Douma, C. Trimp, and K. Veling. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1990, pp. 169-201, pp. 177-185, for a succinct overview of these critical reviews.

²²⁰See similarly Douma, "Christus en cultuur", pp. 187-188.

²²¹See J. Piper. *The Future of Justification: A Response to N.T. Wright*. Wheaton: Crossway

Miskotte missed key elements in Schilder's proposal. Berkouwer adequately branded the debate between Schilder and Noordmans as ships passing in the night.²²² Far from developing a natural theology, Schilder sought to bring Kuyper's cultural engagement into a radically christocentric framework. Understandably, Schilder responded that in his view Miskotte and Noordmans had not understood him well. "I do not absolutize culture, I only absolutize the Word of God", Schilder replied to Noordmans in 1936.²²³ Van Ruler, another *Hervormde* colleague of Schilder, understood that better. He saw in Schilder an attempt to identify soteriology fully with Christian culture.²²⁴ His fear was not an absolutizing of culture itself, but of an isolated Christian culture. Van Ruler speaks almost prophetically of what the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* would embody (section 5.3).²²⁵ Indeed, as we saw in the Assen controversy, Schilder placed all the emphasis on special revelation. As to the church, we saw how Schilder stressed its faithfulness to Christ, expressed in a radical submission to Scripture alone. He fiercely criticized an ecclesiology from below that incorporated empirical notions. It is these dialectical elements, which were also present in the early Schilder, that will develop into a complete distancing from all notions of commonness, both in common grace and in common revelation. In his *Heidelbergse Catechismus*, Schilder will like Barth distance himself from natural theology and general revelation (see section 4.3.1). While Noordmans and Miskotte understood Schilder to be taking steps towards the assimilation of Christ into culture, his intention was actually the very opposite: To demark a clear separation between Christ and culture, yet without abandoning culture. It was Schilder's concern to guarantee the connection of faith to everyday life that was the driving force behind his article. It was this concern that Noordmans shared with Schilder, and they both worried that Barth did not have enough to offer on precisely this issue.²²⁶

In Schilder's unfolding cultural program, both his dialectical reservations

Books, 2008 and N. T. Wright. *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision*. London: SPCK., 2009.

²²²Berkouwer, *Zoeken en vinden*, p. 266, and, similarly, T. van der Linden. "Modernisme op klompen? Noordmans en Schilder in debat over de algemene genade". In: *Alles of niets: Opstellen over K. Schilder*. Ed. by G. Harinck. AD Chartas-reeks 6. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2003, pp. 127–144, pp. 137–140.

²²³Puchinger, *Een theologie in discussie*, p. 93.

²²⁴See also Hepp, *De algemeene genade*, pp. 79–88, for a similar critique.

²²⁵Ruler, *Kuyper's idee eener christelijke cultuur*, pp. 13–17, 116–124. In the context of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* in the 1990s, Douma echoes Van Ruler's critique (Douma, "Christus en cultuur", pp. 190–192). For the discussion of this critique, see the next chapter under section 4.3.1.

²²⁶K. van Bakkum. "Op de tweesprong van kerk en wereld". In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, pp. 17–34, pp. 24–25.

marked by the postwar climate and his commitment to the Kuyperian cultural engagement are apparent. The typically modern, individualistic emancipatory character of Schilder's theology are also visible in his theology of culture. As with the church, Schilder wanted a radical submission to the Word of God alone, and therefore gradually distanced himself from common grace.²²⁷ It is also striking how what I have proposed as the governing theme of Schilder's theology, the *praesentia salutis*, perfectly fits his cultural program as presented in this period. Schilder seeks to guarantee a concrete and embodied presence of God's work through his people. Since God has committed himself to cooperate with his creatures, it is essential for his presence in this world that the people he has created realize 'salvation' in all domains of life. For Schilder, we can even say that 'salvation' has no meaning if it has no cultural implications. For it is precisely humanity's cultural vocation that is the object of salvation. Christ is the second Adam.

In the previous chapter, we took the pair of breadth and depth as a way to describe Schilder's theological emphases. In this chapter, I explained how for Schilder the depth-part finds its way into a strong emphasis on the church. As I also argued, the broad element is not forgotten, even though Schilder's direct engagement with the arts moves to the background. In this essay on culture, the broad outlook of Schilder's theology is evident. Even the arts are not forgotten, as Schilder speaks about Christ for whom the absence of visual arts in Jewish culture must have been painful.²²⁸ The purpose of the Christian life is creational: it is to do culture, to work. Schilder presents a very earthly theology, and goes so far as to understand the significance of Christ in cultural terms. Christ restores what was, and that is the cultural mandate. At the same time, Schilder's concern is the depth, the commitment to God's Word, to remain faithful. True culture can only be found in Christ, is his radical, antithetical statement. With the essay examined above, we come close to the heart of Schilder's contribution to the debate around Hauerwas's radical position, namely how the doctrine of creation can gain a place in an ecclesiology characterized by an emphasis on withdrawal. To complete the picture of Schilder's contribution, however, we need to take one final step: what is the position of the church in Schilder's cultural theology?

²²⁷Schilder's critique on common grace will be treated in the next chapter when it becomes outspoken.

²²⁸Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", p. 243.

3.4.2 Why the Church Should Be Public

In this period, Schilder begins emphasizing not only the importance of the church's distinctness, but also its public, broad character.²²⁹ In what follows, I will first explore *why* Schilder believes the public character of the church to be important, and then describe *how* that works out in practice.

In 1932 Schilder writes an ironical article entitled “De kerk in het slop” (The church in a cul-de-sac).²³⁰ In this article, that is somewhat puzzling because of its implicitness, he makes clear what he thinks of a church that is not public. Schilder adopts an ironic tone when sketching a church that has become isolated from the world, a church that has entered “the Edifying Cul-de-sac, the Courtyard of the Preparation for an Edifying Death.”²³¹ This is a consequence, Schilder asserts, of the division of life into different spheres. Here he critically echoes the famous Kuypertian concept of sphere sovereignty, albeit without directly criticizing its spiritual father. Through the distinction this concept implies, the church is limited to its own domain, the religious, which in fact comes down to pious singing and preparation for heaven. With a strong note of irony, Schilder finishes his article as follows: “We old folks will close the windows. Then we will not hear the cars honking so loudly in the street. And our neighbors will not hear us when we play an old song about our dear Lord on our phonograph, and we will not hear them. And yet life brims with such energy on the street outside! Lord, have mercy!”²³² Schilder sees how the theory of different life spheres is being used as a means to isolate the church from the rest of life. This will develop into a fuller critique on the spheres in subsequent years. Yet already in this article, Schilder shows that the danger of dualism between church and world is among his primary concerns, as indeed it is in “Christ and Culture”.

In the essay on Jesus Christ and cultural life, Schilder makes this connection between the church and the cultural mandate explicit when he pleads for an essential role for the church in that mandate. There he makes clear that the church is vital for the cultural mandate, that the church is ultimately an instrument for it. It is worth quoting him at length:

²²⁹I use the word ‘public’ here without clear definition as referring to the church’s engagement with the world.

²³⁰The word ‘slop’ literally means slum and refers to the back alleys in cities where poor people lived in miserable conditions. The expression ‘in het slop raken’ means ‘to come to a dead end’. Throughout the article, Schilder plays with both meanings.

²³¹“het stichtelijk slop. In het Hofje der Propaedeuse op een Goeden Stichtelijken Dood (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 142).

²³²“Wij, oudjes, zullen de ramen wel dicht doen. Dan horen wij de auto’s niet, die op de straat zo hevig toetren. En dan horen de burens niet, dat wij een oud liedeken afdraaien van onzen lieven Heere, op onze grammaphoon, een ander hof-mens op de zijne. Terwijl het leven bruist – daarbuiten op de straat. Kyrieleis (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 142).

It is in this way that the church must be a hearth where God's humanity is 'charged' from on high with strength from above. *From the church*, where God distributes the gifts of Christ, the people of God have to pour out over into the kingdom of heaven with its broad regions. From the church the fire of obedience, including the pure cultural glow, must blaze forth all over the world. Take the church away, and the kingdom of God becomes a nebulous affair. Put the kingdom of God in the mist, and the Christ is renounced, also in matters of culture. It is in the *church* that Christ has the Spirit bring children of God to conception. Only the *church*, as the mother of believers, brings forth the perfect persons, who, also in terms of cultural life, bear the burdens of the entire world. Only the *church* joins them together into an unbreakable communion and teaches the *norms* for all the relationships of life, even outside the church. The church alone is the bearer of God's Word, and can in a national community proclaim the norms of God and so make known to that community what riches can, according to its own nature, be developed in its life, and how this can and should be done.²³³

Schilder's point is clear: The church is the one and only connection to the Word of God and to Christ, and thus the key to a faithful cultural mandate. Given the connection to Christ, there is no chance that there will be such a thing as true culture outside of the church. If, then, the church is essential to the cultural mandate, this means that it is essential for the church to be broad and public in nature. It is the church's role to "teach norms, also for life outside of the church". Put this way, the main impetus for Schilder to emphasize the public nature of the church is the cultural mandate, "the return to the ABC". Just as Christ's significance lies in the restoration of the creational order, so the church's significance lies in that same purpose, that is, in "serving God in concrete life".²³⁴

²³³"de kerk moet de vuurhaard zijn, waar de mensch Gods van boven af „geladen" wordt met kracht van boven. *Uit de kerk*, waar God de gaven van Christus uitdeelt, moeten naar alle zijden de menschen Gods uitstroomen naar het rijk der hemelen met zijn breede contreien, en moet de vuurhaard van gehoorzaamheid, dus óók van den zuiveren cultuurgloed, over de wereld heenlaaien. Neem de kerk weg en het rijk Gods hangt in den nevel, en de Christus is verzaakt in de cultuur. De *kerk* is het, waarin Christus den Geest Zijn kinderen laat verwekken. De *kerk* alleen baart, als moeder der geloovigen, die gave personen, welke, ook voor het cultuurleven, lastendragers zijn voor heel de wereld. De *kerk* alleen verbindt hen tot een onverbreekelijke gemeenschap, en leert de *normen* voor alle levensverbanden, ook buiten de kerk. De kerk alleen als draagster van Gods Woord, kan in een volksgemeenschap normen geven, en zóó in dat volksleven weer openbaar doen worden, wat in dat leven naar eigen aard zich aan rijkdom kan ontplooien." (Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", p. 279).

²³⁴Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", p. 249.

The church is instrumental to the cultural mandate. Again, Schilder's theological core emphasis on the *praesentia salutis* can be clearly discerned. Just as God is concerned with his entire creation, with the course of history, so the church should be.

However, Schilder also posits another argument for the public character of the church. This argument runs deeper in that it makes the church's public character an essential feature of it, not a contingency. The faithfulness of the church is inextricably intertwined with its public engagement. These are inseparable properties. How does this argument work? Schilder puts it this way: "He who exposes himself to the general public and undergoes the clashes of life in the jostle of men, he delivers himself to judgment. The masses may be mistaken—and they usually will be—but that is not his fault but that of the public."²³⁵ The public engagement of the church is a theological necessity. Christ spoke in the public square, he sought out the busy moments in Jerusalem for his activities. Therefore, the church should do the same. As with Christ, we should not run away from the offence that the gospel brings. False prophecy that seeks seclusion makes sweet what is bitter. In the public square that is impossible. There the bitter taste cannot be hidden. Schilder then uses the doctrine of election as an example. In public we will always feel how much this doctrine is indeed a *decretum horribile*, as Calvin put it. "For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22:14), Jesus said, and he said it on the street.²³⁶ The seclusion of the desert and the inner room is very attractive, since it takes away the unpolished (*hoekigheid*) character of the gospel, Schilder claims. Isolation can be a ramification of this public announcement of the gospel, but then it is God, not me, who draws the line between the faithful one and the stranger.²³⁷ This is what Schilder has in mind: public witness, obedience to God on the stage of the world. This is not a contingency, it forms the very heart of what a church should be.

The public character of the church is thus deeply intertwined with the objective character we saw in the previous section. Only a public church will maintain its objective character. Or, in other words, a church without public engagement can by definition not be a faithful church. As Schilder puts it: "The main issue is whether I myself arrange the mystery, or whether I will undergo it for the sake

²³⁵"Want de man, die zich aan de publieke opinie blootstelt, die de botsingen van het leven in het gewoel der mensen mee doorleeft, hij geeft zich aan het oordeel prijs; de massa moge zich in hem vergissen – wat ze dan ook doorgaans doet – maar het ligt aan hem niet, doch aan het publiek." (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 16). Note the biographical element in this quote.

²³⁶Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 25.

²³⁷See also Schilder's suggestion of necessary abstinence in "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven" as noted above.

of God, I, the one smitten by God.”²³⁸ Not only is the institution of the church part of the non-recurring history of God, but that is also true for the entire world. God continues to work in the entirety of his creation. The consummation of the world is an event of cosmic significance. For that reason, the public nature of the church, or rather the participation of the individual in the public church, is a necessity to objectively being church. The connection with Christ is also in the public witness. A sect or circle isolated from the public is not only unfaithful to what Christ commands, it also jeopardizes its understanding of who Christ is and its participation in his actual work in the world. Seclusion is the demand of false prophets, since it draws the church away from God’s one work in the history of the world. “Do not go out. Do not believe,” Schilder repeats, “for the future of the world is not in a private chat, but in the joint advance of the one, holy, catholic, Christian church.”²³⁹

It is remarkable that few of those who have written about Schilder’s ecclesiology have noted what in my view is its central feature: that the church is fundamentally instrumental in the cultural mandate. Wikus Buys, who devotes his entire dissertation to Schilder’s ecclesiology, writes that the church is a cultural force, and that church history and world history are intertwined, but he fails to take the next step of affirming the instrumentality of the church in Schilder’s thought.²⁴⁰ Jos Dee notes that the church exists for the kingdom, but does not draw any conclusions from this observation.²⁴¹ Two other articles by Kim Batteau and Henno Smit that seek to introduce Schilder’s ecclesiology also seem to miss this point.²⁴² This is not to say that this omission is not understandable. Especially with regard to the church, it is easy to get lost in the commotion about the nature of the church and to miss the purpose of it all. There is nonetheless truth in Van Minnen’s complaint that “none of Schilder’s followers have understood him” – even if it is a crude and wanting generalization.²⁴³ It is those who try to capture the whole of Schilder’s theology who get his radical idea: Van Minnen and Jager both call Schilder’s attention for the earth the core of his thought, and see in this point his lasting relevance.²⁴⁴ I agree with their

²³⁸“Maar de grote vraag is dan: of ik het mysterie zelf arrangeren zal, dan of ik het on-der-gaan zal vanwege mijn God, ik Gods geslagene.”(Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 28).

²³⁹Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 45.

²⁴⁰Buys, *Sodat hulle een kan wees*, pp. 222-223, 287-288, 300-302.

²⁴¹Dee, *Schilder oecumenicus*, p. 192.

²⁴²Smit, “Gehoorzamen: achter Christus aan! Schilder over de kerk” and Batteau, “Schilder on the Church”.

²⁴³J. M. van Minnen. “Een dichter-schriftgeleerde tussen hemel en hel”. In: *Voorlopig* 2.9 (1970), p. 5.

²⁴⁴J. M. van Minnen. “Licht in den rook. De theologie van prof. dr. K. Schilder”. In: *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 86 (1986), pp. 80-100, p. 81 and Jager, “Concretiseren tot het uiterste”, p. 74. See also Bekkum, “Klaas Schilder”, p. 27.

view: Schilder's church is fundamentally instrumental to the cultural mandate, to the mundane realities of everyday life. That life is, for Schilder, the heart of the Christian life.

3.4.3 How the Church Should Be Public

Thus far, we have seen that a public church is important for Schilder, and also why he finds it important. Now the remaining question is: what does this mean in concrete terms? What is the significance of 'public' in the public church? In "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", the article we have been drawing on above, Schilder explains that he does not conceive of a church with a direct task in culture. On the contrary, such an understanding would "murder and violate the church".²⁴⁵ This has to be understood in the light of Schilder's fear that the church would become one of the spheres of life, as he expressed it in "De kerk in het slop", quoted above.²⁴⁶ The church should not become a player on the field of culture, an "exponent of culture" or one of the terrains of life such as the state, school, or the arts.²⁴⁷ Rather, the church is the beating heart of all those spheres: "The church is *not permitted* to be even the *smallest* cultural force, but as indirect cultural power she *must* be the very greatest."²⁴⁸ The church is thus clearly distinct from the kingdom of God, and yet the kingdom depends entirely on the church: "Take the church away and the kingdom of God becomes a nebulous affair and Christ is forsaken in culture." For in the church, and in the church alone, Christ bestows his gifts upon his people: "As the sovereign of the *church*, Christ is the king of culture and its re-Creator."²⁴⁹ The church is the bearer of the divine Word, the church engenders believers, the church forges the unbreakable bonds of the community where the norms for life are taught, Schilder continues. Schilder presents the church as we have seen before, the place where the Word of God forges a community, the place where Christ is present. This is how the church is to be broad and public – not by becoming a cultural factor as such, but by keeping to its task of representing Christ in preaching the Word and making a community of new people, of "perfect human beings".²⁵⁰ In a brief article published that same year, Schilder criticizes the American idea of an "efficiency church", where the church is measured by what it

²⁴⁵"want een zoodanig kerkbegrip vermoordt haar, schendt haar." (Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", p. 279).

²⁴⁶Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 143-145.

²⁴⁷"cultuurexponent" (Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", p. 279).

²⁴⁸"De kerk *màg*, o neen, niet eens de *kleinste* cultuurkracht zijn; maar zij *mòet* de grootste indirecte cultuurmacht zijn." (Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", p. 279).

²⁴⁹"Als *Kerk*vorst is de Christus koning der cultuur en haar herschepper." (Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", p. 279).

²⁵⁰Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", p. 251.

achieves in society. As examples Schilder mentions the church's role in the social issue, in the League of Nations, and in international ecumenical conferences. This is an identification of church and kingdom that endangers the unique role of the church. This reasoning is governed by Schilder's deep concern for the church's faithfulness. In his view, the church is the battery where people are charged to work in the kingdom.²⁵¹ As such, the church is essential for the world by being the church. The "truly human", the "life of the people", is what is at stake with the church. As an example Schilder, betraying his cultural pessimism à la Rookmaker,²⁵² refers to the arts which used "to lift the faces of the people up to heaven", while nowadays we only have "raucous movies" and "an outpouring of sin in politics, the press, and in commerce that makes us shiver." The only remedy for the cultural devaluation of his days was, in Schilder's view, Christ. And the place where Christ gathers his people and bestows his gifts is the institution of the church.²⁵³

While Schilder does not yet distance himself from the the distinction between the church as organism and the church as institution, it is clear that he is referring here to the institution of the church. This distinction, which had been put in place by Kuyper, was an established distinction within the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.²⁵⁴ The fact that Schilder does not use the distinction here might be only a weak argument from silence, but it is still telling. This is certainly so when we see how a few years later, from 1935 onwards, Schilder begins to criticize this distinction explicitly. Yet already at this time his focus is on the church as institution, only to be distinguished from the kingdom, not from something called the church as organism. In 1930 he still used the distinction, even though in that particular case he did not find it very helpful.²⁵⁵ Furthermore, Schilder consistently puts the words between quotation marks as a way of indicating that he is using the terms as they are used by others.²⁵⁶ Here too Schilder's emphasis is on the church as institution.

Schilder leaves no doubt that he wants to steer clear of direct interference by the church on the other spheres. In the small book—quoted above—entitled

²⁵¹Schilder, *VWVerk I*, pp. 194-197.

²⁵²In the 1970s Rookmaker developed a neo-Calvinist critique of modern art (H. R. Rookmaker, *Modern Art and the Death of Culture*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1970).

²⁵³"Tegenwoordig zijn wij afgezaakt naar schreeuwende films, naar een tooneel, dat zich enkel in stand houden kan, wanneer het minderwaardige genre niet van de programma's wijkt, en is er in handel en bedrijf, in pers en politiek, een uitgieting van zonde, en een machteloosheid, die ons ijzen doet." (Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", pp. 279-280).

²⁵⁴See Honig, *Dogmatiek*, pp. 715-717 and, in the same collection where Schilder published his article on Christ and culture, Vliet, "Jezus Christus en het kerkelijk leven", p. 121.

²⁵⁵K. Schilder. *Afbouw: een woord inzake de praktische erkenning van het promotierecht der theologische school te Kampen*. Kampen: Kok, 1930, p. 69.

²⁵⁶Schilder, *Afbouw*, pp. 28, 40, 55.

Afbouw: een woord inzake de praktische erkenning van het promotierecht der Theologische School te Kampen (Completion: a contribution to the discussion on the Kampen Theological Seminary's right to grant doctoral degrees), Schilder takes a position in a heated debate that was already decades old and would continue a few more without ever coming to a decision. After the *Gereformeerde Kerken* came into existence in the 1890s, they ended up with two theological schools: the theological faculty of the Free University in Amsterdam, and the Theological School in Kampen. The difference between the two was that the Kampen School was directly owned and controlled by the churches, while the Free University was an independent institution with only informal ecclesial ties. The discussion was laden with partisanship and enmity between Amsterdam and Kampen, of which also Schilder, as a Kampen alumnus, was not free. An important issue in the debates concerned the question whether or not the church can practise science. Schilder agrees with the majority opinion that the church should not engage in science, "since she has better, higher work to do"²⁵⁷. However, science as a means to her own particular ends is allowed and even necessary. This does not imply that the church controls theology or the academy, as some feared. The academy is free and as such much larger than the church. But the church is also free, free to assign an institution to reflect on her confession, on her office, on the training of her ministers.²⁵⁸ This argument shows that what Schilder means by the church is an institution that has a particular role within the different spheres of life, and that the church and the university have a certain independence.

The emphasis on the church being restricted to her own sphere returns elsewhere. In defence of his participation in the national Christian Radio station, the *N.C.R.V. (Nederlandsche Christelijke Radio Vereeniging)*, Schilder in 1933 stresses that his strong emphasis on the church elsewhere does not imply that cooperation with other Christians in a radio station is impossible. Schilder says he would have applauded a Reformed radio station, but since that is beyond reach, this is a good alternative. The church has its own task, the radio another. Of course, radio can evangelize and can stir hearts, Schilder avows, but the same is true also for beautiful songs. Should the church then cut its own records and build its own street organs, Schilder asks rhetorically?²⁵⁹ Later that year, Schilder's relativization of the church is even stronger. On that occasion he fiercely opposes the "churchism" he perceives in the attempts to have an equal number of denominations represented on the *N.C.R.V.* board. Church and radio station are two, Schilder asserts. What matters when it comes to the radio is people's doctrine of Christ and Scripture, not the church to which

²⁵⁷Schilder, *Afbouw*, p. 60.

²⁵⁸Schilder, *Afbouw*, pp. 60-71.

²⁵⁹Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 251-257.

they belong. “The matter of church membership is in this case irrelevant”, Schilder boldly writes to close his article.²⁶⁰ In polemics with the editor-in-chief of the influential Christian newspaper *De Rotterdammer* in 1929, Schilder draws the same lines. It is fine for a political party and newspaper to have an interdenominational character, as long as they do not meddle with the church’s affairs.²⁶¹

This might seem at odds with Schilder’s emphasis in “De kerk in het slop” that the church should not be limited to its own circle.²⁶² This is not necessarily the case, however. Schilder still accepts the Kuyperian spheres of life as a good model. As he explains in *Afbouw*, the church should not meddle directly with the affairs of the university, as both spheres ought to maintain their respective sovereignty. However, this good principle should not be used to isolate the church, as Schilder’s concern in “De kerk in het slop” can be framed. The church and politics, the church and academics, have everything to do with each other. It is as Schilder writes in 1933 in a *Persschouw* where he approvingly quotes G.C. Berkouwer who, like him, complains about the church’s isolation from politics due to an erroneous understanding of the notion of sphere sovereignty. Schilder summarizes: “Dr. Berkouwer concludes: The church should stay on its own terrain, i.e., she should preach the Word. But that Word happens to speak to all terrains.”²⁶³ A sermon can therefore address issues that play a role in the academy. A synod is allowed to forbid membership in a certain political party (for which Schilder will successfully plead in 1936). The church is the heart of all spheres of life, not the outskirts that prepare for heaven. Its creed and confessions, its preaching of the Scriptures, have a say in all of life.

If, now, the narrow church as institution is on the one hand confined to its proper task and at the same time has cosmic proportions, that implies that the liturgy, the Sunday worship, becomes the heart of the church’s public role. The church also has deacons, forms a community (see section 3.3.2), teaches catechism classes, and brings pastoral visits.²⁶⁴ The heart of what the church does, the most visible aspect with the most impact, is the Sunday worship. Schilder never makes this connection between the liturgy and the church’s public role

²⁶⁰“De kwestie tot welke kerk hij behoort, is DAAR bijzaak.” (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 299). Wietze de Vries sees in this quote a “line of thought that is still under the influence of Abraham Kuyper.” I believe this to be a misunderstanding. As I will argue, this statement does not conflict with Schilder’s nuanced position in the debates over organizations in the years following the schism of 1944 (Douma, “K. Schilder in zijn hantering en waardering van de gereformeerde confessie”, p. 41).

²⁶¹Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 61ff.

²⁶²Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 142-148.

²⁶³“De Kerk, zo concludeert Dr B., blijve inderdaad op ‘eigen terrein’, d.w.z. ze predike het Woord. Maar dat Woord spreekt nu eenmaal over alle terreinen.” (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 233).

²⁶⁴Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, p. 285.

explicit. The reason for this is most likely its uncontested nature as a generally shared presupposition. In Schilder's *Gereformeerde Kerken*, the sermon was the uncontested heart of the liturgy. Schilder himself affirmed this centrality and defended it.²⁶⁵ Schilder himself was a famous preacher, and in his services the sermon was the uncontested center.²⁶⁶

The centrality of the sermon did not keep Schilder from paying attention to the liturgy throughout his life, however. In his early years, as I also related above in sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, he advocated a more aesthetic liturgy. He pleaded for hymns next to Psalms, well before the synod in 1933 finally allowed for some. He fiercely criticized the rhymed version of 1773 which was in use in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, and engaged critically with newer translations, like that of the *gereformeerde* pastor H. Hasper in 1936 and 1948, for example. From the thirties onwards, when the Liturgical Movement gained momentum in the Netherlands through the work of G. van der Leeuw, Schilder along with most *gereformeerden* became more critical of liturgical renewal for fear of allowing the sacraments to take over from the Word.²⁶⁷ The church's worship had Schilder's attention throughout his life, and the heart of that worship was the sermon. This was the heart because the liturgy had the function of conveying the Word of God to the participants, a didactic function.²⁶⁸ That fits the role of the church in the public domain: It shapes its members through the Word on Sunday in order to engage the world on Monday.

Returning to the tension I noted between the narrow and broad understanding of this church, it definitely is a tension in Schilder's thought that will return with renewed vigor in the next period. The tension extends beyond the question of the spheres, but lies at the heart of what constitutes the church. If we look at the way Schilder describes the church in "coetus et congregatio", it has cosmic dimensions. The church is a community that is nothing less than the new humanity itself. The church is the human race in the second Adam, and in some sense the only humanity. In the previous section, however, we saw Schilder endorsing Berkouwer's remark that the church has its own terrain, namely the preaching of the Word. Is the church the new humanity with cosmic proportions, or is it the institution that preaches the Word and administers the sacraments? The next period will shed new light on this apparent tension

²⁶⁵J. Smelik. "Schilder, de kerkdienst en het kerklied". In: *Alles of niets: Opstellen over K. Schilder*. Ed. by G. Harinck. AD Chartas-reeks 6. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2003, pp. 47-77, p. 51.

²⁶⁶F. H. von Meyenfeldt. "Schilder, de man op de kansel". In: *Geen duimbreed! Facetten van leven en werk van prof. dr. K. Schilder 1890-1952*. Ed. by G. Harinck and J. de Bruijn. Baarn: Ten Have, 1990, pp. 172-177.

²⁶⁷Smelik, "Schilder, de kerkdienst en het kerklied", pp. 53-71.

²⁶⁸Smelik, "Schilder, de kerkdienst en het kerklied", p. 49.

in Schilder's thought on the relationship between the church and the world. Following the schism, the tension will even become more poignant when the question arises whether or not a schism in the church implies a schism in all domains of life. Many of Schilder's students believed that this was indeed what his thought implied.

3.4.4 In Sum

As to the public role of the church, we see Schilder presupposing the Kuyperian framework of the institution of the church as the place where Christians are inspired by Scripture for their role in society at large, in God's creation. The church and the kingdom are separate entities, with the former being the source of the latter. The church as organism is neither endorsed nor denied, but mostly ignored. All the attention is given to the church as institution. Kuyper's undertaking to emancipate Reformed people from their isolation is continued by Schilder. However, instead of the doctrine of common grace, it is the doctrine of the church that is given all attention for the advancement of the neo-Calvinist cultural program. This is a clear shift in attention compared to Kuyper, without changing the building blocks of that edifice. Rather than focusing on 'what God has given' in a terrain of common grace, Schilder stresses 'what we have to do' on that broad terrain of creation. The emphasis on the church then forms a logical step. For if Schilder's attention is no longer on what God gives outside of the church as an act of common grace, the attention shifts to the place where God still bestows his gifts and utters his decrees: in the domain of particular grace, namely the church. Schilder seeks to save and advance Kuyper's broad creational theology of cultural engagement for a new era. A doctrine of common grace no longer fit this era: "For all too long we have lived in a fairy-tale world [...] harsh reality imposes itself. The game is over and the players have been mobilized."²⁶⁹ Rather than traces of grace, Schilder saw the Anti-Christ's movements in the world around him. This threw Schilder back on the church, the place where Christ promised to be present. This is where the "truly human" is still found, since this is where God continued his work of creation in Christ. At this point, the people of the new time, of the kingdom, are gathered by Christ. There they hear the lofty mandates of this new kingdom from the Scriptures, so that they can once more, like Adam, put the plow in the ground at the places where God wants the earth to be tilled. Schilder does not expect great things to grow or to be constructed; after all, he speaks of "truncated pyramids".²⁷⁰ But the foundations have to be laid, work has to be done, even though resistance is to be expected. The community of the church is the heart of this new world, from there it starts,

²⁶⁹Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 233.

²⁷⁰Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", p. 269.

and only there can it be started, since that is the only place where Christ gathers his people.

3.5 Theological Conclusion

I began this chapter by stating that the period under consideration would provide the framework of the house that represents Schilder's thought on the church. Whereas the first chapter gave a rough sketch of the house, the contours are now clearly taking shape, so that we can start to give a preliminary answer to our central question: *How does Klaas Schilder conceive of the church as both distinct from and engaged with the world?* We have indicated open ends and suggested further developments on many issues, but we now clearly know where Schilder is heading. And as I have repeatedly said, Schilder does not swerve, but navigates a steady course.

The ecclesial turn I have described demands to be seen not as an alteration of the bearing, but as a shift in attention due to changing weather. Whereas during the first period the skies were clear and the waters peaceful, and there was ample time for long-term reparations, now the skies have darkened and foam is starting to form on the waves, so that the focus needs to be on more pressing matters. It might seem as if Schilder in the first period focuses on culture in his engagement with contemporary artists and in writing about the necessity of renewal, while he in the second period loses that focus. As I have attempted to show, Schilder's focus on the church was a necessity in order to preserve the possibility for cultural engagement. Even in all his focus on the church, it is clear that the church is instrumental to the cultural mandate. For Schilder, the church's distinctness is inextricably linked to its public engagement. The gospel can only be understood when it is heard, proclaimed, and lived in the face of the entire world. How this vision works out concretely is not yet entirely clear: The basic framework still awaits the furniture, the wallpaper, the floor, and the doors.

In the previous chapter, Schilder drew the picture of a weak and oppressed church that sought to keep its distinct character as church. While the apocalyptic oppression recedes somewhat into the background, Schilder develops his view on how the church is to be distinct from the world and to maintain its character as church of Christ, and not just as one of the world's many assemblies. For the church to be the church of Christ, the institution is the key element. Schilder looks for objectivity in a world that is awash with mysticism on the one hand, and powerful anti-christian claims on the other. The answer is a church that expresses its adherence to the Word of God in a clear confession connecting it to the historical church of Paul, Jesus, and Moses. It should be noted how the

praesentia salutis is the underlying concern here, connecting Schilder's defence of the perspicuity of Scripture at the synod of Assen and his initial polemics against Karl Barth. The 'perspicuous' church is where Christ works, that is where the Scriptures are read. The church is concrete and visible; it is not an idea, but a reality. As such it is also a community. Faith is communal, just like knowing God is a communal endeavor.

The institution is, however, never complacent or static. This is a line continued from the early Schilder's critical ecclesiology: Being the church is never abiding in the status quo, but a mandate. This is an individual moment in Schilder's ecclesiology, namely personal responsibility as a member of the church, always obedient. Schilder applies the dynamic motif in the direction of the continued pursuit of unity which should, in his view, be characterizing the church. The church in the world has to be one. The idea of the pluriformity of the church was a way of keeping God's concrete command at arm's length, and thus of escaping the dynamic lordship of Christ.

However, all that has been said about the distinct nature of the church must be understood within the framework of God's purpose for the world and humanity's place within that overarching frame. The church is, then, instrumental for the original mandate to engage in culture. The public nature of the church is thus essential to its character. The church is there *for* the world. In Schilder's thought, everything has to be understood from the beginning: Christ came for the sake of restoration, the church is now the way God uses to provide access to Christ and the original mandate of creation. As to the *way* the church should be public, Schilder emphasizes that it should not engage the world directly, but only indirectly, through the individual believers. The church remains the distinct church in preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments, but through that it is instrumental for the cultural mandate. This cultural mandate is, again, an expression of Schilder's concern for the *praesentia salutis*, the deep connection between God and history.

There are thus two core tensions in Schilder's understanding of the relationship between the church and the world that become visible in this period. The church is a static, historical institution on the one hand, and a dynamic reality on the other. The church is limited to the institution, and yet it is also God's new humanity. These tensions will increase over the coming periods, but their contours are already visible here.

Increasing tensions: 1934-1944

4.1 Preliminaries

As with the previous chapter, I will begin this chapter with a preliminary section on elements that need to be addressed before we can describe the developments in Schilder's thought concerning the church and its engagement with the world. I will start with a broad sketch of the biographical and historical background of this period. Secondly, following up on the previous chapter's treatment of Karl Barth and the synod of Assen, I will describe how the engagement with Barth continues and relates to Schilder's own Kuyperian tradition. This serves to form a better understanding of the theological developments in this period.

In the second and third sections, I will continue along the lines of the previous chapter. Avoiding repetition, I will only draw attention to changed emphases, and restrict detailed accounts to elements that become more substantial in this period. The only real novelty in the decade under consideration concerns Schilder's treatment of the covenant. Yet even then, the bulk of the actual content of this concept is in line with earlier emphases. Most of this chapter serves to substantiate what I laid out in the previous chapter. To return to the metaphor of the house, this chapter will provide us with the floor, wallpaper, and furniture of the house of which we have up to now only seen the basic structure. Here no shift in attention occurs, in contrast to the mid-twenties where, as we saw, Schilder exchanged his emphasis from the 'broad' to the 'deep'. Schilder now continues along the earlier lines. The increased tensions in church and society serve to bolster Schilder's opposition to certain strands in his tradition.

4.1.1 To Kampen and to Climax

For several reasons, 1934 was an important year for Schilder. For one, it was the year he assumed his position as professor of dogmatics at the Kampen Seminary, taking up the chair left vacant by Anthonie Honig. For Schilder this implied a major change in his move from Rotterdam and the province of Holland where he had spent almost twelve years. Secondly, 1934 brought the two decades of his pastoral ministry to a close. Of course, the past years he had been working on his dissertation, in anticipation of this change. Schilder had therefore already been devoting much of his time to study rather than the ministry. But now he definitively left his pastoral duties behind him, and could fully devote himself to academia in writing and teaching. The new position also implied a move for the family to Kampen, to Schilder's own roots, place of birth, and youth. Significantly, he and his family moved into a grand house on the canal in the town center. Eventually, they would even move to the house where Schilder's mother had served as a maid to provide a meagre income for her children after her husband's passing. With this step in Schilder's career, he completed an impressive emancipation from the tiny house on the cul-de-sac Houtwijk to a magnificent residence on the Vloeddijk.¹ The cigarmaker's son had become a professor.

The period that followed was climactic in many ways. On a personal level, the late thirties and early forties would become the climax of Schilder's theological and intellectual work. The brochure *Ons Aller Moeder* (1935) has been praised as the apex of his ecclesiology and *Wat is de hemel?* (1935) as his best theological book.² In the *dictaten*, the notes his students took of his classroom lectures and published, we see Schilder treating many issues in a lucid, systematic way that we do not find in either his earlier or later work. In these *dictaten* the polemical unrest felt in most of other works is somewhat absent.

On the ecclesial level, the tension in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* increased considerably during this period. Days after his inauguration in Kampen, Schilder began a series in *De Reformatie* on the pluriformity of the church where he openly attacked Valentijn Hepp, the dogmatician of the Free University.³ The relationship with Hepp had already been damaged by a conflict within the board of *De Reformatie* back in 1930, ending in Hepp's dismissal. In 1935 another conflict created a new rift in the board, once more over the stance of *De Reformatie* on ecumenical cooperation in the international alliance of Calvinists (*Calvinistenbond*). As an outcome, Schilder became the sole editor. The *De*

¹Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, p. 37.

²B. Kamphuis. "Inleiding". In: *Wat is de hemel?* 3rd ed. Klassiek licht. Barneveld: Nederlands Dagblad, 2009, p. 9.

³Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 303-359.

Reformatie therefore became his weekly, strongly associated with *Kampen* and the Reformational Movement.⁴ Around the synod of 1936, the tensions would increase as Schilder now had an active role as a professor at the Kampen Seminary. In and around the synod, the polarization between Schilder and the Free University camp, represented by Hepp and Herman Kuyper, only increased. On many issues the synod meant a victory for Schilder, but peace was far away. The road to the 1939 synod, where many of the burning issues like common grace and the pluriformity of the church were on the agenda, was paved with distrust and polemics. It was in particular Hepp's brochures with the telling title '*Dreigende Deformatie*' (Imminent Deformation) that fueled the fire.⁵ During these years, the schism of 1944 was anticipated by the increasing tensions within the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.⁶

As is true more often, the tense situation in the churches had parallels with the situation in society at large. From 1933 onwards Adolf Hitler's ascent in Germany cast an ominous shadow over Europe. The economic crisis had plunged Europe, including also the Netherlands, into a devastating recession, resulting in widespread poverty. The economic malaise only fueled existing communist, fascist, and national-socialist sympathies. Hitler's rise to power made the threat of war and trouble very concrete, especially in such neighboring countries as the Netherlands. National socialism even cast its shadow on the 1936 synod, which decided that membership in the National Socialist Party (*NSB*) in the Netherlands was forbidden for members of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. On May 10, 1940, the German armed forces invaded the Netherlands and forced a quick victory by the Blitz of Rotterdam on May 14. The German occupation was to have profound ramifications for Schilder's life and work, to which I will return in greater detail below.⁷

These were the circumstances of the third period. As we will see, Schilder's thought on the church would not undergo dramatic developments compared to before. In fact, his reflection even gives evidence of great internal consistency. What changes is that some topics, such as the covenant, gain in prominence, and that we are now enabled to form a more complete picture of his ideas through the *dictaten* and the commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism. Schilder's systematic approach in these years aids us in forming a better picture of the house, including details that go beyond the framework. It also entails a sharpening of some points of criticism that could already be found *in nuce*, especially with regard to Kuyper. The harshness displayed in these critiques must be read against

⁴Harinck, *De Reformatie*, pp. 173-194, 256-277. See also the glossary under Reformational Movement.

⁵E.g., Hepp, *De algemeene genade*, on common grace.

⁶Harinck, *De Reformatie*, pp. 318-358.

⁷Jong, *Nederland in de Tweede Wereldoorlog I*, pp. 116-143, 362-365.

the backdrop of the tense climate of the 1930s, where Schilder was increasingly framed as an opponent of Kuyper. Yet as I will show, Schilder is and remains more Kuyperian than he may look at first sight.

4.1.2 Navigating between Barth and Kuyper

A second step in this preliminary section is to situate Schilder between his two major conversation partners in this period, Karl Barth and Abraham Kuyper. Just as the synod of Assen was an important step in setting the stage for the previous period, so we now need this second step. Strauss is correct to argue that Barth and Kuyper are the two principal figures needed to understand Schilder.⁸ As to Barth, Schilder will continue along the lines initiated by the synod of Assen. At the same time, his early dialectical elements will increasingly put Schilder at odds with the Kuyperian tradition during this period.

Karl Barth remained one of the principal opponents in Schilder's polemical theology. As the themes that gained prominence around the synod of Assen, epistemology, revelation, and history continue to be Schilder's main concerns. When he assumed the chair of dogmatics at the Kampen Seminary, the topic of his inaugural address was *Barthian Existential Philosophy against Reformed Faith-from-Hearing Theology*.⁹ His self-described task as the Kampen dogmatist was to defend the prolegomena of Reformed Dogmatics in line with his predecessors Bavinck and Honig: faith from hearing Scripture. As such, Karl Barth remained the principal enemy of this Reformed prolegomena.¹⁰ The year Schilder assumed his new post in Kampen also marked the centenary of the 1834 *Afscheiding*. In one of the lectures he gave for that occasion, Schilder characterizes the *Afscheiding* tradition as a defence of the Canons of Dordt. In line with that tradition, the Canons are in need of defence, also today, against one theology in particular: Karl Barth. Towards the end of his address Schilder writes: "In the end the central question remaining is this: Does God's drama of judgment and grace really have a place in history or not?"¹¹ When Karl Barth was invited by Utrecht University to hold a series of lectures on the Apostles' Creed in 1935, Schilder requested the manuscript from the publisher so that he could start his 'counter-lectures' at the Kampen Seminary the day the lectures were published.¹² This reveals how Schilder perceived Barth's thought: When

⁸Strauss, *Alles of niks*, pp. 28-29.

⁹"Barthiaanse existentie-filosofie contra gereformeerde geloofsgehoor-theologie" (K. Schilder. *Eerste rede, eerste optreden*. Ed. by E. A. de Boer. Franeker: Van Wijnen, 1989, p. 44).

¹⁰Schilder, *Eerste rede, eerste optreden*, pp. 41-44.

¹¹"Tenslotte zit het vraagstuk immers dáárop vast: heeft God in de geschiedenis plaats voor dat werkelijke drama van gericht en van genade," (K. Schilder. *De dogmatische betekenis der Afscheiding ook voor onzen tijd*. Kampen: Kok, 1934, p. 39).

¹²Harinck, *De Reformatie*, p. 302.

the wolf enters the sheep pen, every second counts! Schilder's earlier critique on Barth's notion of revelation and history runs like a thread through the lectures.¹³ That same year saw the publication of Schilder's *What is de hemel?*. Since it is one of Schilder's profoundest works, describing it as a polemic with Barth would fail to do justice to its richness. However, I do think we have a parallel between Schilder's main criticism of Barth and the central claim of the book, which I take to be that God and history are deeply intertwined, that we will not let "our faith in the *praesentia salutis* be taken away, our faith that the Eternal One is really present, that salvation is truly here."¹⁴

Schilder's critical engagement with Barth's theology reaches a climax in the early years of his professorate. The emphases of his earlier criticism that arose around the synod of Assen continue to dominate his critique. As the passages we quoted above suggest, the theme of revelation and history is still the heart of the critique. While it does expand also to other domains that we cannot treat in greater detail here, even these can often be related to Schilder's central concern of the *praesentia salutis*.¹⁵

For a climax to be a climax, there must be subsequent decline. In many ways Schilder's engagement with Barth stays climactic. However, in his popular journalistic work, Schilder's attention starts to shift beginning in the mid-thirties.¹⁶ Especially in the classroom, Barth's theology remains one of Schilder's principal interlocutors, and he will continue to oppose Barth until the end of his life. His commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, which was started in 1938, is among other things a deep, continued confrontation with the theology of Barth as a part of the Reformed tradition. Schilder continues to engage with Barth's new volumes of his Church Dogmatics until III/3, which saw publication in 1950, two years before Schilder's death in March 1952.¹⁷ Erik de Boer has

¹³Schilder, *Dictaat credo*.

¹⁴"Hij zal zich door wie hem daarom neo-calvinist en hoogmoedig schelden, niet het geloofsstuk laten ontnemen van de praesentia salutis, het *hier-zijn* van den Eeuwige, het *hier-zijn* van het heil." (Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, p. 87).

¹⁵R. Barkema. *Nee tegen Karl Barth? Een historisch-theologische terugblik*. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, p. 50.

¹⁶Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik* I/1, I/2, and II/1, which appeared respectively in 1932, 1938, and 1940, were mentioned in *De Reformatie*: KD I/1: "Karl Barth's nieuwe dogmatiek" in: *De Reformatie* 13-11 (16 december 1932), KD II/1: "Persschouw" in: *De Reformatie* 18-24 (11 maart 1938), KDII/1: K. Schilder. *Verzamelde werken 1940-1941*. Ed. by G. Harinck. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1995, pp. 51-52. This is not the case for the later volumes that appeared during Schilder's lifetime, II/2 (1942), III/1 (1945), III/2 (1948), III/3 (1950), and III/4 (1951). However, it is not as if these later volumes passed unnoticed. In Schilder, *HC III*, Schilder engages in a long confrontation with the later volumes of Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik*. His main focus there is Barth's concept of sin as *Das Nichtige*, which, according to Schilder, implies a gnostic-dualistic doctrine of creation.

¹⁷Schilder, *HC III*, pp. 133-480.

suggested that Schilder intended his Heidelberg Catechism commentary as a counterpart to Barth's Dogmatics.¹⁸ Notwithstanding the speculative nature of this suggestion, it is indeed striking that the volumes have a similar size and projected number of volumes (see 4.1), and that Schilder used a similar structure with volumes numbered using Roman letters, each divided into paragraphs with the § sign. It befits Schilder that he would counter Barth with a commentary on one of the confessions, suggesting that theology should be done in critical sympathy with the confessions.¹⁹



Figure 4.1: Announcement of Schilder's Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism in *De Reformatie* in 1949

The ecclesial tensions around the synods of 1936 and 1939 demanded increasing attention from Schilder, such that there was less room for extra-ecclesial polemics with Barth and the *Hervormden*. A clear expression of the extent to which these tensions were on Schilder's mind can be found in his travel journal. In 1939 Schilder was invited to speak in the United States, and he traveled from the East to the West Coast and back in a couple of months. Schilder sent a brief report to *De Reformatie* on a weekly basis. In these articles, however, the Dutch polemics are never far away.²⁰ Part of the explanation for this phenomenon is the fact that Schilder's theological adversaries tried to arouse suspicion against him in the Christian Reformed Churches, and yet it also reveals how much for Schilder the ecclesial polemics occupied his mind, even far away from home.

¹⁸Schilder, *Eerste rede, eerste optreden*, p. 20.

¹⁹K. Schilder. *Kompendium dogmatiek deel I*. ed. by R. H. Bremmer and J. Verlare. 1st ed. Eerste Kamper Schrijfkamer, 1938, p. 13.

²⁰G. Harinck and A. J. van Ommen. "Schilders Amerikaanse reis van 1939". In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, pp. 261–323, pp. 281–286.

More striking yet is the way his concerns are apparent in the classes he taught. Schilder's theology was polemical and contextual even in the classroom. As related above, Schilder inserted a special series on Barth's Credo in 1935.²¹ In 1942 he inserted a special series on the church which consisted of a lengthy commentary and criticism of a series of articles on the church in *De Heraut*, the ecclesial journal that often opposed him.²²

The contents of these ecclesial tensions were in large measure a battle over the heritage of Kuyper and Bavinck: common grace, the pluriformity of the church, and the covenant. After the synod of 1936, these topics were also put on the list of topics on which "opinions were expressed that differed from the usual doctrines". The synod decided that these topics were to be resolved by a committee for the subsequent synod in 1939.²³ The reference to a variety of opinions with regard to pluriformity and common grace was a clear allusion to Schilder. As such, his writings now officially came under scrutiny. The polemics over Kuyper's heritage increasingly assumed the form of a kind of trench warfare, dominating Schilder's writings from 1936 onwards. While Schilder's opposition to Barth continued along the old lines, his criticism of the Kuyperian legacy deepened. It is at this point where most of the theological development, also in his ecclesiology, takes place. It is interesting to note that Schilder's critique of Kuyper runs parallel with commonalities shared by Schilder and Barth. Schilder even makes this explicit at times. In his 1942 address on common grace, for example, he writes that because of Kuyper's concept of common grace, "he has only facilitated a [...] critique from the [...] Barthians that rightly points to a tendency of cultural optimism [...]"²⁴

Yet Schilder was not alone in his criticism of the Kuyperian legacy and in his goal to develop and improve the tradition. In the course of the 1930s, the so-called Reformational Movement formed around Schilder, the Vrije Universiteit philosophers Herman Dooyeweerd and Dirk Vollenhoven, and the elementary school teacher and publicist Antheun Janse. This movement did not exist in any formal way, but was rather endorsed from below. Its leading representative, Schilder, did not necessarily share all their viewpoints. The endorsement materialized in the founding of the popular ecclesial journal *Pro Ecclesia* in 1936, which clearly identified the four figures above as the "principal leaders" whose

²¹Schilder, *Dictaat credo*, pp. 1-3.

²²Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 1. For *De Heraut*, see the glossary.

²³*Acta der Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland gehouden te Amsterdam van 25 augustus tot 2 oktober 1936*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1943, pp. 103-104. The other topics were the immortality of the soul, self-examination, and the unity of the two natures of Christ.

²⁴"...heeft hij aan de [...] barthianen een [...] op cultuuroptimistische tendenzen terecht wijzende critiek makkelijker gemaakt ..." (K. Schilder. *Is de term algemeene genade wetenschappelijk verantwoord?: twee bijdragen tot de bespreking der gemeene-gratie-idee*. Kampen: Zalsman, 1947, p. 33).

thinking the editors sought to popularize.²⁵ This movement of renewal, like the *beweging der jongeren* in the twenties, was an attempt to advance and reform the *gereformeerde* tradition for the new century. In doing so they trod different paths than the *beweging der jongeren* which had become isolated, especially following the schism in 1926 leading many of the *jongeren* to find shelter in the newly formed denomination, the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Hersteld Verband*.²⁶ A core characteristic of the Reformational Movement, and a clear demarcation from the ‘jongeren’, was objectivity and rationality. Janse had put forward the objective character of the covenant and of Scripture over against the experiential spirituality of many of his Reformed fellow believers. It is no coincidence that Janse developed this critique in Zeeland, the heartland of Dutch Pietism and its alleged founder Willem Teellinck. At the same time, Dooyeweerd and Volleghoven developed an equally rational philosophical system that tried to grasp reality from a Reformed perspective. In doing so, they did not eschew criticism of the ideas of the founding fathers Kuyper and Bavinck. This rational and objective character fit seamlessly with emphases found in the broader cultural context. While the Reformational Movement appealed to many, it also elicited opposition. People like Valentijn Hepp and Herman Kuyper of the theological faculty of the Free University strongly opposed this ‘novelty’ and argued for a less radical development, closer to Bavinck and Kuyper. Schilder’s critique on Kuyper and his emphasis on the covenant have to be understood in the context of the broader Reformational Movement within the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.²⁷

Even though Schilder’s critique on the Kuyperian heritage grows, as we will also see below when it comes to the church, he continues to see himself explicitly as part of that tradition. The most salient example is the way *De Reformatie*, of which Schilder had become the sole editor, devoted an extended issue of 47 pages to commemorate Kuyper’s legacy on the centenary of his birth in March 1937.²⁸ Schilder’s article on Kuyper’s Stone Lectures is mostly written in praise of Kuyper, albeit not entirely devoid of criticism. The way Schilder saw himself is nicely captured when he writes: “And, we – we are in the difficult position of the person who has to criticize certain aspects in order to preserve the fundamental concepts. This is an enterprise completely in line with Kuyper.”²⁹ And this was

²⁵Harinck, *De Reformatie*, p. 316 and Langevelde, *In het klimaat van het absolute*, p. 182.

²⁶See chart (A.1) and glossary for the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Hersteld Verband*.

²⁷Langevelde, *In het klimaat van het absolute*, pp. 101-121, 141-151.

²⁸The more Kuyper-friendly weekly, *De Heraut*, only devoted 12 pages to this centennial. I am indebted to the unpublished essay by Andreas Jongeneel, “Kuyper en De Reformatie” (May 2016), for my description of the Kuyper-issue of *De Reformatie*.

²⁹“Kuyper over het Calvinisme.” in: *De Reformatie* 18-5, p. 71 (October 29, 1937). See J. Kamphuis. “Critische sympathie, over den dogmatischen arbeid van dr. K. Schilder”. In: *Almanak FQI 1953*. 1953, pp. 73-108, pp. 103-106 and Veenhof, “Medewerkers van God”, p. 139, who both note that, although Schilder was a critical student of Kuyper, he was a student

no mere public rhetoric. One of Schilder's students remembers him often saying: "Today I must criticize Kuyper, later you must do the same with me."³⁰ When Schilder criticizes the notion of the church as organism in his classroom lectures on the church from 1942, he writes that "the Kuyperian line is actually closer to ours than Spier's [a Kuyperian contemporary of Schilder]."³¹ On a similar note, Schilder also wants to stress his proximity to Bavinck: "If they want to accuse us here in Kampen of departing from Kuyper, then we will reply: I beg your pardon, but we are returning to Bavinck."³² Especially from the perspective of the schism, the relationship between Schilder and Kuyper is indeed "a historical drama filled with misunderstandings".³³

I am inclined to think that Schilder indeed offers a fair description of himself. Of course, he deviated more from Kuyper than some of his contemporaries like Herman Kuyper and Valentijn Hepp did. His public rhetoric in particular was very strong at times, and could easily be misinterpreted for a complete departure. However, if we look at Schilder's theology from a greater distance and see it in the context of the wider Reformed tradition at that time, comparing it to the likes of Noordmans, Miskotte, Van Ruler, Haitjema, Barth, Brunner, and Tillich, Schilder is indeed one of the most distinctly Kuyperian voices in the first half of the twentieth century. His thought is then in some ways not more than a few footnotes to Kuyper's impressive oeuvre, trying to move his thought into a new century. Especially in his classroom lectures, Schilder's proximity to Bavinck is even more striking, as he himself often makes explicit.³⁴ In this section I position Schilder between Kuyper and Barth. B. Kamphuis has rightly said that "Schilder felt connected to Kuyper in sharing the ground of historical Christianity and biblical, confessional Reformed theology, contrary to Barth."³⁵

nonetheless.

³⁰"Ik moet vandaag op A. Kuyper kritiek oefenen, u moet het later op mij doen!" Interview with J.J. Arnold by H. Veldman in *De Reformatie* 69-45 (Augustus 27, 1994).

³¹"...dat de Kuyperiaansche lijn dichter bij de onze komt, dan die van Spier" (Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 83).

³²"Als men ons hier in Kampen dus ervan beschuldigt van Kuyper af te wijken, zeggen we: pardon, we gaan naar Bavinck terug." (Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 97).

³³G. J. Schutte. "Schilder en Kuyper". In: *Geen Duimbreed! Facetten van leven en werk van prof. dr. K. Schilder 1890-1952*. Ed. by G. Harinck and J. de Bruijn. Baarn: Ten Have, 1990, pp. 21-30, p. 30.

³⁴Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, pp. 96-97 Note, e.g., how close Schilder is to H. Bavinck. *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*. 4th ed. Vol. 4. 4 vols. Kampen: Kok, 1930, pp. 288-291. This observation is deserving of greater study than I can devote to it in this context. See also Kamphuis, "Critische sympathie, over den dogmatischen arbeid van dr. K. Schilder", pp. 76-78, who makes the same observation with regard to Schilder and Bavinck, especially in the *dictaten*.

³⁵B. Kamphuis. "De geschiedenis: vicieus of lumineus?" In: *K. Schilder: aspecten van zijn werk*. Ed. by J. Douma, C. Trimp, and K. Veling. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1990, pp. 90-118, p. 113.

To that should be added that the *Afscheiding* tradition still plays an important role in the background, as noted above in section 2.1.2.

Having laid out the context and background of this period and described the intellectual field in which Schilder operates, we can now turn to the heart of this chapter where a substantiation of Schilder's thought on the church and the world awaits.

4.2 The Distinct Church

4.2.1 Unity As the Primary Mark of the Church

It is fitting to begin the description of Schilder's thought on the church in this period with his pluriformity polemics. In the previous chapter, I briefly described how Schilder came to oppose the Kuyperian idea of the pluriformity of the church. In the course of the 1930s, his critique met with increasingly fierce criticism from the establishment, as voiced by Herman Kuyper and Valentijn Hepp. They became entangled in a lengthy battle over several issues, where the pluriformity of the church formed one of the key topics. Schilder kept adding fuel to the fire and devoted many columns in *De Reformatie* to this topic. The articles gathered in the collected works on the church of the period between 1934 and 1940 are almost uniquely devoted to the polemics over the church's unity.³⁶ Even in the classroom, where Schilder covered a wider range of topics, pluriformity is present. His 1935 lectures, which were supposed to deal with Barth's Utrecht Lectures from that same year, deal extensively with the national polemics, making the section on the church far longer than the other sections.³⁷ While Schilder had abruptly abandoned his polemics on pluriformity in 1940 due to the German invasion and switched to oppose Nazism, two years later the topic was back on the table. Although he could no longer publish anything, Schilder continued the polemics in the classroom, treating a series of articles in *De Heraut* at length, with the pluriformity of the church as one of the foci.³⁸ While the Dutch Jews were forced to wear the yellow badge, Schilder's priority in his dogmatics lectures was the church and especially its unity. So too the lectures he gave in the United States in 1939, far from the Dutch scene, deal with the pluriformity of the church.³⁹ Only the German invasion in May 1940 was sufficient reason for Schilder to stop, or rather to pause, his polemics on pluriformity. The question that imposes itself in light of my broader thesis concerns the reason for Schilder's extensive attention to this particular issue.

³⁶Schilder, *VWKerk II*, pp. 443-445.

³⁷Schilder, *Dictaat credo*, pp. 22-42 on a total of 72 pages, which is more than a quarter.

³⁸Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 1.

³⁹Schilder, *Dictaat Americana*, pp. 32-36.

In other words, why is it that Schilder keeps painting and refurnishing this particular room of the house, while apparently neglecting others? Does this not suggest that Schilder has lost his earlier emphasis on breadth from sight, and is only concerned with its faithfulness, reduced to a relentless pursuit of an idealized unity? This is a fair question that must be answered affirmatively, albeit only as part of a more nuanced account.

Before I answer that question, it is necessary first to take a look at what happens in Schilder's pluriformity polemics. They are directed in three different directions: the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*, and his own church. Schilder's polemics with the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* were mostly with the conservative/confessional faction within that church. In his key publication, *Ons aller moeder*, his idea of the dynamic church is used with all its force against that faction. Schilder's main point of critique is that the members of the conservative faction should not stay in a church that does not wholeheartedly adhere to its own confessional standards. The unity of the church is not in the institution itself, but in its confession.⁴⁰ The confessionals fail to maintain the confession – "Oh irony of facts", Schilder exclaims.⁴¹ Their argument that God is "still" working in that church has no value for Schilder. Parallel to the metaphor of the wave we saw in the previous chapter, he now uses the metaphor of marriage. We never say a marriage is 'still' quite valuable if one member of the couple is unfaithful, but still does the dishes and the laundry.⁴² It fails to understand the dynamic aspect of the church and ties it too closely with one particular institution. The context of this polemic, which was the centenary of the *Afscheiding*, reveals the degree to which the ecumenical question was the issue of the day. Schilder wanted to unite with the confessional faction in the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, because they shared the same confession. That unity could not be exercised in the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, since that church failed to maintain the confession properly.⁴³ Unity is again understood in terms of the institution and its confession. Schilder wants a united church, but that should be a church with a clear confession. Schilder has a normative, juridical approach to church unity, albeit not in the Roman Catholic version. The historical institution itself does not guarantee the faithfulness of the church any more than the faith of its participants or the truth of its sermons does. What is decisive is the institution's adherence to the confession according to God's Word, a confession that is more than a dead letter.

The criticism that Schilder directs against the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*

⁴⁰Schilder, *Ons aller moeder*, pp. 78-85.

⁴¹Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 140.

⁴²Schilder, *Ons aller moeder*, pp. 45-47.

⁴³See Schilder, *VWKerk II*, pp. 124-142, 150-152, 275-276, 391 and Schilder, *Ons aller moeder* for the polemics with the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*.

is a lopsided version of the same argument, as we already saw extensively in the previous chapter. Here the problem is not, as in the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, the confession, but the unity. The fact that they share a confession but fail to unite with the *Gereformeerde Kerken* is their sin of schism. “Are we mocking? Some people seem unable to read serious and concrete language. He should take a year to read Kierkegaard. Does not the Lord see at the same time our cup of tea and the official benediction, our intentions and our pretensions?”⁴⁴ With this line Schilder refers to the hypocrisy in the fact that on every field the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* and the *Gereformeerde Kerken* cooperate and drink tea together as if there was no schism. To maintain the schism on Sunday is a grave sin, for where we are *coram Deo*, in the house of the Lord, there we are separated without good reason. The *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* have a shared confession but fail to unite, the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* wants unity but has lost sight of the importance of the confession. Both, in Schilder’s view, fail to adequately follow up on Jesus’s command to “be one”.

With the exception of a peak in *Hervormde* polemics around the *Afscheiding* centenary, the bulk of the attention, both in public work and in classroom lectures, goes to the internal debate over the pluriformity of the church within the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. As we saw in the previous chapter, this debate had a history that extended back before Schilder, and in terms of content nothing really new is offered in this period. The same emphases I discussed in section 3.3 reappear: His critique on speaking of the church empirically instead of by faith, his opposition to the pluriformity of truth that the pluriformity of the church implies, and the—in Schilder’s view—fundamental problem of the quietism implied in the idea of pluriformity. The main polemics are with Hepp in *De Reformatie* from November 1934 to March 1935, and concern the interpretation of Calvin on the issue of the pluriformity.⁴⁵ In May and June 1936, there is a polemic with *De Heraut* on the recognition of baptism and pluriformity.⁴⁶ And, finally, from February 1940 onwards there are skirmishes over the question whether or not the synodical decision of 1905 on the issue is still of application.⁴⁷ To this list one should add Schilder’s classroom notes from 1942, since they are an explicit polemic with *De Heraut*. With regard to pluriformity, Schilder merely seeks to counter the claim that this view is commonly held in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. This claim was an important tool in the debates surrounding the 1939 synod, where pluriformity was once more tabled as one of the dogmatic issues that needed resolving. In his 1942 classroom

⁴⁴Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 343. See also Schilder, *VWKerk II*, pp. 340-343, 352-355 and Schilder, *Dictaat credo*, p. 29.

⁴⁵Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 384-445.

⁴⁶Schilder, *VWKerk II*, pp. 285-325.

⁴⁷Schilder, *VWKerk II*, pp. 424-440.

notes, Schilder shows how controversial the issue was, and the extent to which opinions among the theologians of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* had differed over the past decades.⁴⁸ These polemics were largely responsible for increasing the tension within the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. Throughout, Schilder found himself in opposition to the Free University/*De Heraut* camp of Herman Kuyper and Valentijn Hepp. Without adding much substance to the debate, it deepened the rift that would almost inevitably lead to a schism in the mid-1940s. Schilder's commitment to the unity of the church ironically led to yet another schism in an already divided Dutch Reformed tradition.⁴⁹

While there is little new in the way of content, Schilder's devotion to the unity of the church certainly intensifies. As Henno Smit also notes, from the mid-thirties onwards Schilder elevates ecumenicity to a fourth mark (*kenmerk*) of the church. In Schilder's theses on the church,⁵⁰ which he published in *De Reformatie* in May 1935, Schilder writes: "Ecumenical will is a primary mark of the church" and "constitutive of the church".⁵¹ This word 'mark' (*kenmerk*) can be read in two ways. Schilder could be implying that a fourth mark should be added to the three marks of a true church as listed in the Belgic Confession: the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the practice of ecclesial discipline.⁵² This is how Smit interprets Schilder.⁵³ It could also be a reference to the four marks or attributes of the church in the Nicene Creed, where unity is indeed the first mark of the church, next to its apostolicity, catholicity, and sanctity.⁵⁴ Either way, Schilder puts his opposition to pluriformity and his understanding of the visible unity of the church in the league of the most fundamental constitutive marks of the church. Anything brought into opposition to this essential mark of the church requires a response.

I can now return to the central question of this section, which is why Schilder so occupied himself with this particular theme of unity, to the point of risking a schism. And how does that relate to Schilder's double concern for depth on

⁴⁸Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, pp. 1-8.

⁴⁹See Dee, *Schilder oecumenicus*, pp. 139-150, for a more in-depth survey of the pluriformity polemics in the 1930s. See also Buys, *Sodat hulle een kan wees*, pp. 141-221.

⁵⁰A few months earlier Schilder had published a list of theses on the topic of the church from a certain Rev. J. Dijkstra. These theses argued along Schilderian lines and may very well have inspired his own theses from a few months later ("Stellingen inzake de kerk" in: *De Reformatie* 15-23, p. 192 (March 8, 1935)).

⁵¹"Hierdoor is tevens als konstitutief 'kenmerk' van de kerk van den eersten rang erkend de wil, en de daad van het vergaderen der gelovigen tot één lichaam. Oeucmenisch-willen in primair kenmerk der kerk." Schilder, *VWKerk II*, pp. 247-8.

⁵²See article 29 of the Belgic Confession

⁵³Smit, "Gehoorzamen: achter Christus aan! Schilder over de kerk", p. 89.

⁵⁴See how the word 'kenmerk' is used for both in Honig, *Dogmatiek*, pp. 717-726. Bavinck is more consistent and speaks of the *kentekenen* of the Reformation and the *eigenschappen* of the Nicene Creed (Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 4, pp. 291-300, 304-309).

the one hand, and breadth on the other? In the case of Schilder, the answer must always be in part that he responded to whatever was at hand. All the 'main polemics' on pluriformity are a response to a lecture or series of articles from someone else. In such a situation, a small matter could easily become a hotly debated topic. Of course, Schilder, as one of the most influential writers in the churches, was himself an important cause of the heated debate. Despite the fact that he often was the one who wrote in response to others, he also often was the one who fueled the fire of the debate.

There must, then, be more to an answer. Part of that answer lies in what we already noted in the previous chapter, namely the central place the tension of the Christian life occupied for Schilder. As we saw above, this theme stayed prominent in his understanding of the covenant, where wrath and promise stand side-by-side. This early motive in Schilder's thought explains his deep fear of the quietism that, in his view, would inevitably result from the idea of pluriformity.

There is, however, another motive that plays a role which is revealed in this period alone. Earlier on, Schilder had noted that for Kuyper the idea of the pluriformity of the church was related to the truth. In many different churches with different confessions and different practices, the truth about who God is, is reflected in a more complete way than it is with only a single, uniform church. Schilder had always been critical of that, but now it is clear that he perceives another consequence of this connection: "From pluriformity of the church to pluriformity of the truth is a small step. It is, however, a disastrous one", so Schilder writes in one of his polemical pieces in 1935.⁵⁵ This connection brings us back to the essential theme of truth and revelation, as we discussed it at length in the previous chapter. It is the unity of the truth that is at stake with the unity of the church. In the idea of pluriformity, Schilder perceived a lurking relativism that would, in his eyes, lead to a relativization of the truth. In Assen, the source of that truth was at stake. Now, that same truth was at stake in how it is confessed in the concrete church. As has been noted, Schilder was not against the idea of pluriformity as such, but "pluriformity can only blossom where truth is demarcated from lie."⁵⁶ Again, a missional-apologetic motif undergirds Schilder's concern: "What else shall we put over against our troubled times if not our obedience? [...] How can we call our contemporaries to return to the fountains of life, if the calling church herself officially perseveres in her own will"⁵⁷ Just like the ecumenical movement of his days, Schilder

⁵⁵Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 445.

⁵⁶Schilder, *Dictaat credo*, p. 26.

⁵⁷"Wat zullen wij tegenover onzen zieken tijd nu anders stellen dan onze gehoorzaamheid? [...] Hoe zullen wij onze tijdgenooten oproepen, terug te keeren tot de fonteinen van het leven, als de oproepende kerk zelf officieel volhardt in de eigenwilligheid" (Schilder, *Ons aller moeder*, p. 90).

considered the visible unity of the church no secondary matter, but essential to the church's truthful witness. Schilder's relentless pluriformity polemics are the clearest example of his unwavering concern for the distinct character of the church in times of increasing tension.

In spite of the above, the nitpicking about how Calvin thought of the church at the very time when the shadow of an aggressive national-socialist neighbor hung over the country strikes the contemporary reader as at least somewhat idiosyncratic. Part of this alienation is due to Schilder's peculiar view on polemics. Schilder believed that polemics—public, rational, and written, that is—were part of what it means to be the church. As I noted above under section 3.3.3, they were for him an expression of what it means to live in the tension of the Sermon on the Mount: public debate that is as sharp as it can be. Schilder was blind to the fact that his polemics led to enmity, not only between him and his opponent, but also between entire groups within the church. Friend and foe intervened and requested him to stop.⁵⁸ Schilder persisted, replying that person and business are separate matters.⁵⁹ Furthermore, above I already pointed to the fierce polemics between Menno ter Braak and Eduard du Perron in the literary periodical *Forum* in 1932. Du Perron's friends also tried to stop his relentless polemics. It is no coincidence that Schilder's polemical activity increases in the course of the 1930s. Polemics were never absent from Schilder's work, but the careful critique, surrounded by caveats, of a number of poets in "Aesthetische Christusbeschouwing" in 1921 shows a very different tone than that of the unfettered polemicist of the mid-thirties.⁶⁰ Schilder used weapons that fit the time. And, "in a time of uncertainty, [...] there can be no conversion without polemics."⁶¹ The thirties were a time of increased tension within both church and society, where harsh polemics became part and parcel of journalistic writing. Schilder's pluriformity polemics should be understood against that backdrop.

In sum, Schilder does indeed narrow his attention to the pluriformity of the church, especially in his public writings. In this emphasis we recognize a characteristic pursuit of the obedience of the church and a normative approach. It is no coincidence that the pluriformity polemics coincide with an increased distance from common grace and other notions of commonness. A radical, Barthian starting point in faith alone, already visible in the early Schilder, finds its way to all corners of his theology. Schilder continues his focus on the depth, on the distinct nature of the church. If the church wants to survive this turbulent world, it needs to remain the church of Christ. A disregard for Christ's command to unity does not fit a faithful church.

⁵⁸Langevelde, *In het klimaat van het absolute*, p. 190.

⁵⁹Schilder, "Ds. K Schilder aan Buskes, Oegstgeest, 10 juni 1926", p. 18.

⁶⁰Schilder, *OWK IV*, pp. 110-149.

⁶¹Schilder, *Ons aller moeder*, p. 8.

The breadth of the church appears indeed increasingly to lose priority for Schilder. As I argued in the previous chapter, Schilder, whether it be consciously or unconsciously, sets priorities according to what his context—in his view—requires. If the columns of *De Reformatie* are a good reflection of what was on Schilder's mind during these years, the pluriformity of the church and national socialism compete for gold. To contemporary eyes they may seem of different weight, but for Schilder they were not. Schilder's call to the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* to obedience and adherence to the confession is followed by a comparison with the *Bekennende Kirche*, which was formed in 1934, and its resistance to the *Deutsche Christen* in Germany: "There becomes visible what happens to a church that turns into a servant of the state."⁶² It was thus for him perfectly normal to switch from heated polemics on the pluriformity of the church to resistance to the German occupiers in May 1940.⁶³ Both were dangerous attacks on Christianity. The idea of the pluriformity of the church risked a climate of relativization of the truth in general, and of the divine command to unite the church in particular. National socialism risked putting the church under the totalitarian aspirations of the state, thereby endangering its catholicity. Schilder's talk about the nation and the queen after the invasion (see 4.3.5) may seem like a surprise following the internal ecclesial polemics, but for Schilder they were two sides of the same coin. In this context it should also be recalled that his *Ons Aller Moeder* started off as a series of lectures on national radio. Schilder's church and his polemics were aimed at the nation, the people. A healthy nation required a healthy church. The church is not a sect but a new humanity. The faithfulness of the church and its breadth, its public character, are for Schilder closely intertwined. As such, a contextual approach should not be mistaken for a shift in theological commitment. The next section will also confirm that Schilder continues to work out for himself what it means for a church to be a broad church.

4.2.2 The Church Visible

In the previous chapter, we saw how Schilder understood the church as the concrete, visible institution. This raises the question how he saw the distinction between the visible and invisible church. This is a classical distinction in Reformed doctrine. Although it dates back to the church fathers, the doctrine rose to prominence after the Reformation when the institutional emphasis of the visible Roman Catholic Church was contested and the believer was placed

⁶²"Daar kan men zien, wat er terecht komt van een kerk, die zich knechten laat door de overheid." (Schilder, *Ons aller moeder*, pp. 90-91).

⁶³Cf. "De pluriformiteit en onze synodes V" in: *De Reformatie* 20-31, p. 244 (May 3, 1940) with "Mijn schildt ende betrouwen..." in: *De Reformatie* 20-35, p. 268-269 (June 7, 1940).

directly before God without the intermediary of the church.⁶⁴ While the invisible church is connected to election and hidden in God's counsel, the visible church is the earthly institution that administers the sacraments. The relationship between the two and the extent to which they coincide were matters of debate. These differences are also reflected in the confessions. While the Westminster Confession, for example, emphasizes the distinction (art. 25), the Belgic Confession (art. 27-29) does not use it.⁶⁵

In this period, Schilder begins to criticize the distinction between the visible and invisible church. In the previous chapter, we already saw that for Schilder the church was understood as the concrete, visible institution. That emphasis now develops into a critique on the classical distinction. It is not Schilder's intention to deny that the church has visible and invisible aspects, since that would be hard to deny. What Schilder wants is to clarify that to talk about the church is to talk about a concrete visible reality. In his words, "every church should be continuously dominated by the question: How does Christ congregate the number of the elect from and through us?"⁶⁶ No other principle, whether "predestination, or faith, or the demonstrable sanctification of the individual", should be leading for ecclesiology.⁶⁷ Here the Reformational Movement emphasis against Platonic idealism in theology and philosophy returns. There is no such thing as an ideal church, an invisible church that is the true church. The church is a concrete, earthly reality. It is a concrete gathering of real people.⁶⁸ So too one does well to recall Schilder's central theological commitment to the *praesentia salutis* here. That too is connected with his commitment to speak about the church as concretely as possible. God's salvation is a *realis praesentia*, and that comes to expression in the church. The Platonic mysticism that runs through all medieval theology, so Schilder writes, "overestimates heaven and mistakenly underestimates earth."⁶⁹

Schilder's reason for this commitment to the visible church is, again, the fear that to speak of the church in abstracto is a way to escape obedience to

⁶⁴See, e.g., Calvin, *Institutio*, p. IV.1.7 and A. Walaëus, "Disputatio XL De Ecclesia" in: H. van den Belt, ed. *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae / Synopsis of a Purer Theology. Volume 2, Disputations 24 - 42*. Trans. by R. Faber. Leiden: Brill, 2016, pp. 572-573.

⁶⁵P. Schaff, ed. *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes. Volume 3. The Evangelical Protestant Creeds, With Translation*. New York: Harper and brothers, 1882, pp. 416-421, 657-658.

⁶⁶"zo moet elke kerkformatie [...] zich steeds laten bepalen door de vraag: hoe Christus de massa Zijner uiterkorenen uit en door ons vergadert" (Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 247).

⁶⁷"...hetzij de uitverkiezing, of het geloof, of de aanwijsbare heiligmaking van een enkeling..." (Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 247).

⁶⁸Schilder, *Dictaat credo*, p. 24.

⁶⁹"Maar nu komt er weer bij de lijn van de Platoniserende mystiek, die heel de middeleeuwen doorloopt en die tengevolge had een overschatting van de hemel en een onderschatting, dat is een verkeerde schatting, van de aarde." (Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 25).

God's commands. In line with his pluriformity polemics, Schilder fears that the invisible church is a way to apply the word 'church' to "all kinds of sects".⁷⁰ The distinction is then used in a similar way as the pluriformity of the church: It justifies the division of the church, and takes away the impulse to unite. The same holds true for the sanctity of the church, which is another attribute listed in the Nicene Creed. If we only believe the sanctity to apply to the invisible church, as Schilder saw to be the case in Kuyper, it takes away the instigation for aspiring to sanctity: "Faith alone does not make a church. There is a church only when one *works* and *confesses* and *exercises a godly life* through faith."⁷¹

The reason for Schilder's criticism lies not only in the consequences of the doctrine. It is also part of a desire to purge his theological tradition of 'scholastic' elements and abstractions. Schilder, and with him the Reformational Movement, advocated a simple biblical Christianity devoid of speculation and the ballast of philosophical influence. Often Plato and Hegel are the whipping boys, especially with Kuyper. Another example is Schilder's critique of the concept of the organic, as we will see in greater detail below. He closes his criticism of the notion of the organic church with a firm rejection: "The term organic is a horrible concept". Schilder then traces its romantic origins in Schelling and Schleiermacher. The word has pantheistic connotations and creates a false dichotomy between the natural and the artificial.⁷² In the case of Barth, Kierkegaard is a favorite example of philosophical influence with problematic consequences. The present study is not the place to analyze or evaluate this endeavor. It is, however, important to note this concern in Schilder for a better understanding. Distinctions in general were suspect, since they in Schilder's view risked abstraction from concrete reality. Thus Schilder can speak of "the distinctions concerning the church" in a general manner.⁷³ For this reason, Schilder abandons the notion of an invisible church that is distinct from the visible church. One might therefore ask how Schilder then accounts for the relationship between election and the church, between salvation and the church. One of the important reasons for the notion of the invisible church was to articulate over against Rome that church and salvation are distinct categories. Before we turn to treat that question, however, we first need to turn our attention to the way the notion of the covenant enters the stage of Schilder's thought.

⁷⁰Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 249.

⁷¹En verder maakt het gelovig zijn nog geen kerk, want de kerk is er pas, als men door zijn geloof gaat *werken* en *belijden* en *een wandel gaat oefenen die heilig is*. Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 44.

⁷²Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, pp. 133-139.

⁷³Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 10.

4.2.3 Church and Covenant

I have now shown how the unity of the church was the prevailing issue in Schilder's writings about what it means for the church to be a faithful church. That room of the house is painted in great detail. Schilder did not neglect the other rooms altogether, however. Before I turn to those rooms, it is vital for us to pause and look at an important novelty in Schilder's thought in this period that quickly assumes an essential place in it and even becomes a part of the 1944 schism: the covenant. It is important to zoom in on this development for our study since for Schilder (and Reformed theology in general) covenant and church are closely intertwined. In what follows, I will first unpack Schilder's views on the covenant, and then move to their bearing on his ecclesiology.

A Surprising Latecomer In the evolution of Schilder's thought, the covenant is one of the most remarkable developments. His theology is often characterized by its strong and particular emphasis on the covenant.⁷⁴ The strong association between Schilder and the covenant can also be explained by the central role this doctrine played in the ecclesial schism of 1944. As we have already seen on numerous occasions, Schilder's heritage has been read through the lens of the schism, even though it occurred towards the end of his life. Nevertheless, the covenant is virtually absent from his writings before *Christus in zijn lijden III*¹, and only becomes more substantial in the third edition of *Wat is de hel?*⁷⁵ Thereafter, beginning in 1934, the covenant becomes one of the most central elements in Schilder's theology, and would remain so until his death. However, even on what clearly is a new element in his thought, his theology does not undergo a profound change. Rather, the covenant provided Schilder with a concept that closely fits the emphases he wanted to make. By appropriating the covenant to fit his schemes, however, he had to alter the concept considerably, again distancing himself from his neo-Calvinist forebears. Otherwise stated, Schilder says exactly what he said before, but he now uses covenantal terms.

That Schilder engaged with the theme of the covenant is no surprise. Rather, if anything is surprising, it is the fact that it took him so long to do so.⁷⁶ Both

⁷⁴Veldhuizen calls Schilder a "covenant theologian" (Veldhuizen, *God en mens onderweg*, p. 67). Strauss, who devoted his dissertation to Schilder's doctrine of the covenant agrees, albeit with some nuance (Strauss, *Alles of niks*, pp. 59-64).

⁷⁵Schilder, *Christus in zijn lijden III*¹, p. 390 and Schilder, *Wat is de hel?*³, pp. 185-197.

⁷⁶Trimp is an exception when he also notes this absence in Schilder's thought until the early thirties (Trimp, "Belijnde bevinding", p. 165). In other works on Schilder, this element is conspicuous by its absence. In his biography Dee simply begins discussing the covenant when he describes *Christ in his Suffering*, without noting that this is the first time the concept appears (Dee, *Schilder leven en werk*, pp. 196, 201). Strauss's monograph and Veldhuizen's chapter on the covenant similarly make no comment in this regard (Strauss, *Alles of niks*, passim and Veldhuizen,

in the broader Reformed tradition and in Schilder's own *Afscheiding* tradition, the covenant was a central theme and always under debate. The tension between covenant and election has been part of the Reformed tradition since its inception.⁷⁷ In the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, the discussion had focused on the relationship between baptism, covenant, and the assurance of salvation. It was Kuiper's doctrine of presumptive (or presupposed) regeneration that had led to the formation of the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* following the *Vereniging* in 1892. They found Kuiper's concept far too rational and objective, and suspected that it only led to false assurance and 'covenant methodism', failing to pay due respect to the experiential reality of faith. At the 1905 synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, the heated debate was put to rest by a formula that satisfied both camps.⁷⁸ In his earlier years, Schilder did not seem particularly concerned with this debate. Indeed, in his 1925 apology of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, he even relativizes the importance of the idea of presumptive regeneration.⁷⁹ This is a remarkable statement in the light of his later polemics and the 1944 schism on precisely this topic. Similarly, in his polemics with the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Van der Schuit*, Schilder almost completely neglects the contents of the claim Van der Schuit makes.⁸⁰ Van der Schuit characteristically criticizes the way presumptive regeneration functions in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, making people passive and unconcerned about their actual conversion and inward experiences. At the time, Schilder's only concern with regard to the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* was ecclesial unity, or more accurately, the lack thereof. The debate between Schilder and Van der Schuit is, typically, like two ships passing in the night. It made Schilder blind to what he and Van der Schuit shared in terms of their common concern about passivity and a false sense of security following from certain strands of covenant theology. Van der Schuit writes in response to Schilder: "For me, glorious covenantal preaching does not start with fixed presuppositions, but shows how the God of the Covenant visits

God en mens onderweg, pp. 67-105).

⁷⁷H. Bavinck. *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*. 4th ed. Vol. 3. 4 vols. Kampen: Kok, 1928, pp. 189-194; see more recently J. V. Fesko. *The Covenant of Redemption : Origins, Development, and Reception*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016. Fesko's short analysis of Schilder's views is unfortunately inaccurate, probably as a result of his limited use of sources. Fesko uses *Christ in his Suffering* as his principal source, although this work is highly inadequate to that end. He claims that "Schilder rejects the covenant of works" and that he "did not define a covenant as a mutual agreement or contract" (Fesko, *Covenant of Redemption*, pp. 182-184). I would rather say that Schilder rejects the covenant of grace, but the nuanced reality is that Schilder saw the two as phases of a single covenant. Indeed, Schilder emphasizes the monopoleuric origins of the covenant, but places equal weight on its dipoleuric existence (see below).

⁷⁸Endedijk, *De Gereformeerde Kerken 1*, pp. 101-105.

⁷⁹Schilder, *Gereformeerd farizeïsme?*, p. 31.

⁸⁰K. Schilder. *Dr. A. Kuiper en het neo-calvinisme te Apeldoorn veroordeeld?: de rectorale rede van docent J.J. van der Schuit*. Delft: Meinema, 1925.

the dead sinner, the child of wrath, in his lost state.”⁸¹ This is exactly what Schilder preached during that time, and also reflective of his criticism on the way the covenant, including presumptive regeneration, was used in the Kuyperian manner. Schilder would, however, point in yet another direction than Van der Schuit and the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* had done. Schilder navigated a third way between Kuyper and the *Christelijke Gereformeerden*, retaining both the Kuyperian broad cultural outlook and the tension without false security of the *Christelijke Gereformeerden*.

When in the thirties the debate resurfaced under the influence of Antheun Janse and his emphasis on the objective reality of the covenant, Schilder woke up. In fact, he now opens his lectures on the covenant with these words:

“The covenant is the body of the church. It shapes the channels that conduct salvation. The covenant is a fundamental relationship for all of life. Consequently, it makes no sense to admit that there is a covenant and then add that there is more. Faith [...] presupposes the covenant. [...] Faith is not abstract. It is impossible to discuss the essence of faith in an abstract manner. For faith presupposes a speaking God and a human being who responds with ‘amen’. Faith is always part of a two-way relationship. God speaks to me and I respond. The covenant is thus of the greatest importance.”⁸²

It may be the fact that the locus of the covenant was gaining prominence in broader continental theology that contributed to Schilder’s newfound interest. In Germany, where Schilder had recently spent two years, the contemporary Old Testament scholar Walther Eichrodt had discovered the covenant as the leading theme in the Hebrew Scriptures.⁸³ This notion was then taken up by that other contemporary Karl Barth, who made the covenant a core part of his dogmatic work.⁸⁴ Despite his Barthian associations, Eichrodt became an important source

⁸¹J. J. van der Schuit. *Dr. A. Kuyper en de sluimerende wedergeboorte*. Dordrecht: D.J. van Brummen, 1926, p. 27.

⁸²“Verbond is het lichaam van de kerk. Het vormt de banen waarlangs de wegen van het heil gaan. Het is een fundamentele betrekking voor heel het leven. Zo bezien is het onzinnig te zeggen dat er wel een verbond is, maar ook nog iets anders. Het geloof [...] is reeds een zaak die het verbond veronderstelt. [...] Het geloof is geen abstractum quid, over welks wezen men in abstracto debatteren kan, want geloof veronderstelt een sprekende God, die de mens amenzeggend antwoordt. Geloof is dus altijd in verkeer opgenomen, vice versa. God spreekt tot mij, ik antwoord. Het verbond is dus van het grootste belang.” K. Schilder. *Het verbond in de gereformeerde symbolen: collegeverslagen symboliek cursus 1941-1942*. Ed. by N. Bruin and C. van Venetië. 1st ed. Utrecht: Copieerinrichting Elinkwijk, 1942, p. 1

⁸³W. Eichrodt. *Theologie des Alten Testaments*. 3 vols. Berlin, 1933, pp. 33-39.

⁸⁴See K. Barth. *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik. Dritter Band. Die Lehre von der Schöpfung. Erster Teil*. Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag Zollikon, 1945, pp. 44-377 and K. Barth. *Die Kirchliche*

for Schilder's later colleague, the Old Testament scholar Benne Holwerda.⁸⁵

The theological concept of the covenant fits Schilder's existing emphases like a glove. Consequently, the covenant quickly became for Schilder the fundamental concept for what religion is, what it means to serve God.⁸⁶ In the third edition of *Wat is de hel?*, where Schilder for the first time writes about the covenant in this way, it functions as a concept that at once gives people an important role in their relationship with God and maintains the strict distinction between God and the human race. God is sovereign in his monopoleuric establishment of the covenant, to use the classical Reformed distinction. This does not imply that human beings are completely overruled in the covenant. On the contrary, the covenant is dipoleuric in its existence. Humanity has a relatively independent role in responding to the demands and promises of the covenant. The covenant can be kept or broken. In Schilder's account of hell, the covenant thus helps him to counter the claim that hell makes people too big and God too small. Within the framework of the covenant, arguments such as this no longer work: God is independent and sovereign in his free decision to initiate a covenant with humanity. Part of that decision is to make the covenant bilateral, giving humans full responsibility. In combining the sovereignty of God in his sole covenantal initiative with the responsibility of people, the reality of hell as the consequence of the rejection of that covenant respects both God in his faithfulness to the covenant and humanity in the responsibility given to it by God.⁸⁷ Here too Schilder navigates between the Barthian emphasis on God's total otherness and the neo-Calvinist emphasis on humans as true co-workers of God.⁸⁸ It is not difficult to see how the covenant could quickly become very dominant in Schilder's thought. His modern emphasis on human beings as God's co-workers and their responsibility, on concrete obedience, his preference for objective over subjective elements in theology, and for 'mystical' categories, all fit seamlessly within a covenantal framework. Similarly, the tension I described in the previous chapter between the communal and the individual is advanced by the notion of the covenant. The covenant is a communal category, while at the same time addressing the individual.

Dogmatik. Dritter Band. Die Lehre von der Schöpfung. Zweiter Teil. Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag Zollikon, 1948, pp. 242-391.

⁸⁵G. Harinck, ed. *Holwerda herdacht: Bijdragen over het leven en werk van Benne Holwerda (1909-1952)*. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2005, pp. 137, 182.

⁸⁶Schilder, *Wat is de hel?*³, pp. 186-187.

⁸⁷Schilder, *Wat is de hel?*³, pp. 185-197.

⁸⁸Schilder implicitly makes reference to Barth's emphasis by saying: "The idea of the incommensurability of God and human being, of infinite Creator and finite creature, is accepted in Reformed Theology". He immediately adds, however, that Reformed theology only accepts this incommensurability in the monopoleuric initiation of the covenant (Schilder, *Wat is de hel?*³, p. 187).

New Directions These emphases, however, also led Schilder to develop the concept of the covenant in different directions than his neo-Calvinist forebears, even though it also moved him in line with earlier accents. The first aspect of these developments is Schilder's affirmation of only a single covenant, albeit with distinct phases. The second, and by far the most controversial, is his insistence that the covenant, as the church, is to be distinguished, albeit not separated, from salvation and election.

First, Schilder stresses the unity of the covenant from before creation to the present, thereby denying the classical distinction between the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. Schilder does not deny the different dynamics between what he calls the two phases of the covenant, he merely wants to stress their profound unity.⁸⁹ This, of course, is in line with Schilder's repeated insistence on always returning, in matters of theology, to 'the ABC' of creation, before the fall. As noted in the previous chapter, this has to be understood from the perspective of Schilder's fears for a Christianity with its back turned to the world. The covenant of grace is not something that can be separated from the original covenant of works. This is how, according to Schilder, the maxim that 'grace restores nature' must be taken to its consequences. Therefore, Schilder stresses that there is but one covenant with different distinct phases. The covenant is not something that was put into place after the fall of humans or angels, but rather the fundamental structure of religion, and even of the cosmos, and not something that was installed as a countermeasure of sorts. Before the fall, the covenant operated by means of works. This is not to say it was a covenant based on merit. Even before the fall, the covenant was initiated by God alone and depended upon God for its fulfillment. Then that covenant was broken by Adam, and the second Adam, Christ, bore the punishment for the breaking of the covenant. From that moment onwards, faith in Christ was the way by which the covenant operated. Schilder insists, however, that the covenant of works is still fully in place. God's demands and his threats are unchanged. God still demands from us that we till and fill the earth, and he still threatens humanity with his wrath when this demand is not obeyed. The role of Christ and faith in him marks the new element in this new phase of the same covenant.⁹⁰ The way Schilder describes the covenant closely fits his description of the church in "Coetus et Congregatio" as we discussed it in the previous chapter (see section 3.2). There is the same emphasis on community, the same cosmic scope, and the same stress on continuity from the pre-fall situation. As we will see below,

⁸⁹See Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 3, p. 207 (ET H. Bavinck. *Reformed Dogmatics Volume 3: Sin and Salvation in Christ*. Ed. by J. Bolt. Trans. by J. Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006, pp. 226-227), who stresses that the covenant of grace is a restoration and fulfillment of the covenant of works, not its abolition.

⁹⁰Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*²¹, pp. 246-268 and Schilder, *Dictaat verbond*, pp. 5-9.

covenant and church are for Schilder intimately connected. In a way, we could say that Schilder's ecclesiology leads him to rethink his theology of the covenant profoundly. We will see this relationship in greater detail below.

This remark brings us straight to the heart of the second matter under debate.⁹¹ As we saw in the previous chapter, Schilder loosened the connection between the church in history on the one hand and salvation and election on the other. With the covenant Schilder makes a similar move. The covenant is the reality of the fellowship of humans with God. This fellowship is initiated by God alone, but continued by both God and people. The shape of the covenant is decided by God: it encompasses commands and promises. The covenant circle has had different shapes throughout history and was defined in different ways. Today, the covenant circle is the church and people can gain access to it through baptism. Up to this point, the Reformed tradition agrees. But then the difficult question that arises is whether everyone who is in the covenant is saved. And if not (which empirically seems to be the case), is God then true to his promises in the covenant? One way to deal with this problem is to distinguish between the internal and the external covenant. The external covenant is then taken to include those who are baptized and visibly part of the covenant. The internal covenant, then, is the real covenant with the truly regenerate and elect. This covenant is invisible and mostly has its place, albeit not exclusively, within the external covenant, even though it does not include everyone in that covenant.⁹² Others, like Bavinck, found this distinction unhelpful, and affirmed the unity of the covenant and treated the relationship between baptism, covenant, and salvation as a mystery that has its unity in the hidden counsel of God.⁹³ Before Bavinck, Hendrik de Cock had also criticized the distinction between an inward and outward covenant for fear of a false sense of security and of passivity. This is the line that Schilder, following Janse, now takes up by disconnecting the covenant from election and salvation. The covenant, Schilder argues, is the historical reality of God's promises and demands that come to humankind. There is no distinction between an internal and external covenant, nor is there a distinction of being *in* the covenant and *of* the covenant. Here a parallel can be noted with the visible and invisible church, where Schilder similarly denies

⁹¹In this section, I draw on Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, pp. 72-78 and Schilder, *Dictaat Americana*, pp. 6-18. In published form, but shaped by the *Vrijmaking* polemics, see K. Schilder. *Looze kalk: een wederwoord over de (zedelijke) crisis in de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*. Groningen: Erven A. de Jager, 1944.

⁹²A. Kuyper. *E voto Dordraceno : toelichting op den Heidelbergschen catechismus*. 3rd ed. Vol. 2. 4 vols. Kampen : J.H. Kok, 1892, pp. 475-476 and A. Kuyper Jr. *In of van het verbond*. Rotterdam: Donner, 1936, where the distinction is affirmed. In A. Kuyper. *Locus de Foedere: college-dictaat van een der studenten*. 2nd ed. Vol. 3. Kampen, 1910, pp. 153-154, however, Kuyper sr. rejects the distinction.

⁹³See Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 3, p. 213 (ET Bavinck, *Dogmatics* 3, pp. 231-232).

the existence of a separate, invisible church. The outward and visible covenant is the only covenant: “We therefore reject any distinction between an inward and an outward covenant. We therefore reject any distinction between an inward and outward church.”⁹⁴ Baptism neither saves you nor guarantees regeneration. Baptism only means that you are part of the covenant, implying that you partake in God’s promises and demands. The promises, however, depend upon the fulfillment of the demands. There is the promise of the covenant, but also the wrath of the covenant. Being baptized into the covenant means you partake in its benefits: God addresses you personally, you are part of the “climate of the congregation of believers”.⁹⁵ And you have the real promises God gave you when you were baptized. The reality of God’s wrath, however, keeps you from laying back: “They used to have bears dance on a heated floor. You can look at the covenant in the same way. It stokes the fires hot. Nothing demands more responsibility.”⁹⁶

Schilder treats the covenant the same way he does the church. He strips it bare of all notions that might serve to mystify its significance. It has to be as concrete and as objective as possible. He was very critical of any passivity it might entail, as we will come to see below, in his use of the covenant in *Ons Aller Moeder*. He found the covenant very helpful in as much as it serves his distinct theological attention for the very concrete reality of this life in obedience to God. Consequently, the tension between the dynamic and the objective that we observed in Schilder’s ecclesiology returns in his covenantal theology. Moreover, Schilder is not afraid to move to the edges of classical Reformed covenantal thought in order to incorporate in the covenant his notion of the pre-fall cultural mandate, thereby sacrificing classical distinctions. The covenant is for Schilder a Kierkegaardian ‘here and now’, a sting that uncomfortably stirs the passive Christian to a renewed obedience in concrete everyday life. It is not a sting that stirs the insecurities of the soul in regard to the assurance of salvation. That is for Schilder an irrelevant question. Instead, it stirs a Kuyperian obedience that stretches to all domains of life.

Church and Covenant We saw above that the covenant became a central topic in Schilder’s thought in this period. There is great similarity between the notion

⁹⁴“Daarom verwerpen wij elke distictie van in- en uitwendig verbond. Daarom verwerpen wij ook elke distictie van in- en uitwendige kerk.” (Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 78).

⁹⁵“het klimaat van een vergadering (geen optelsom) van gelovigen?” (Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 77).

⁹⁶“Men laat beren wel dansen op een vloer die verhit wordt, Zo kan men ook het verbond bezien. Het stookt de vuren heet. Geen ding maakt meer verantwoordelijk.” (Schilder, *Dictaat Americana*, p. 11). See similarly Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 106.

of the church and the idea of the covenant in general: Schilder says the same things, but uses covenantal language.

The covenant is for Schilder the central principle of religion. Given the centrality of the church in Schilder's thought, it then comes as no surprise that church and covenant are intimately connected. I will show below that Schilder wanted a clear distinction between the visible reality of the church and the categories of election and salvation. The covenant, as we saw above, functions in the same way. It is an outward, visible reality, distinct from election and salvation. The covenant means that God makes you a promise. It does not mean that God counts you among the elect. The covenant can be broken. The church, Schilder says, is the circle of the covenant (*bondskring*). It is with the church that God seals the covenant. The covenant is "individual, but never individualistic", because every individual is part of the covenant in the community of the church.⁹⁷ At this point, the tension between the communal and individual aspect of faith returns and leans towards the communal side. What is clear is that Schilder's emphases on the covenant are readily aligned with his emphases in relation to the church. Therefore, the phases of the history of the covenant are equally phases in the history of the church.⁹⁸ Schilder even ties the two so closely together as to say that without the covenant, the church is lost: "Without an awareness of the covenant, every key that fits the church is gone and the church is disabled."⁹⁹

The way Schilder developed a dynamic understanding of the church is precisely reflected in the way he now identifies the church as the circle of the covenant. The church is always challenged by the Word of God to obedience, and to change and to go where Christ goes. It is no coincidence that Schilder's best expression of the dynamic aspect of the church occurs in a book in which he responds to the way the covenant was, in his eyes, misused with regard to the church.¹⁰⁰ In this booklet, which had already been discussed above, Schilder responds to an invitation from the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* to their *Ge-reformeerde* brothers. Issued in the context of the *Afscheiding* centenary, this was an invitation to come back to the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, "back to the covenant" and the table of the Lord's Supper. Schilder's response to such a use of the covenant is very critical. He unmasks the warm sounding invitation as a false one. For, he says, the invitation falsely suggests that the true table of the Lord can be found in the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*. Their usage of

⁹⁷Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, pp. 77-78.

⁹⁸Schilder, *VW40-41*, p. 448.

⁹⁹"Is het verbondsbesef weg, dan is elke sleutel die de kerk past, weg en dan is de kerk buiten gevecht gesteld." (K. Schilder. *Preken*. Ed. by W. G. de Vries. Vol. 2. *Verzamelde werken I*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1954, p. 325).

¹⁰⁰Schilder, *Ons aller moeder*.

Old Testament examples suggest that the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* can be compared to Israel. That comparison is a fundamental mistake, so Schilder insists, a mistake that finds its origin in a confusion between the Old and the New Testament. The misunderstanding centers on the idea of the nature of the covenant. In the Old Testament, God made a covenant with Israel, with a people, focused on a fixed place of worship. But the nature of the covenant has changed, and is no longer with a specific people with a designated place of worship. God's covenant is certainly not with the institution of the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, nor is it with the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.¹⁰¹ God's covenant never implies a laid-back attitude. On the contrary, it always urges one to renewed obedience: "'Covenant' implies: all or nothing."¹⁰²

Rather than a fixed institution, the church is a dynamic reality, so Schilder responds to the *hervormde* pastors. This dynamic understanding follows from a correct view on the covenant. Not only did Schilder disagree with the claim that the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* was the true institution, he also—and especially—found their use of the covenant wanting. Rather than say "Behold the covenant!", it is time to hear God call out to us: 'Act by the covenant'.¹⁰³ At this point Schilder again employs his typical discourse of the word 'still' as a disastrous term (see section 3.3.3). The covenant is not a way of saying that God still has a covenant with that church because there still are many good things there: preaching, good Christians etc. Rather, we should ask what the covenant asks of us today. Where do we fall short? Schilder illustrates what he means with the example of a marriage: "For *that* word 'still' can be used by any adulterous wife who still fulfils all her household duties (the *opus operatum*), but for that one work: that her heart wholly belongs to her husband."¹⁰⁴

As the 'covenant' became the language for Schilder to give expression to his earlier emphases, so this happened also with regard to preaching. The term 'covenant preaching' had long been used in the Reformed tradition. In the way it was used in the Kuyperian churches, it was used as a negative word. Schilder now claims the term in a positive sense, and uses it for his understanding of the covenant: "Covenantal preaching is highly necessary. Many people think that covenantal preaching means: to rock people to sleep."¹⁰⁵ Schilder's view was

¹⁰¹Schilder, *Ons aller moeder*, passim.

¹⁰²Schilder, *Ons aller moeder*, p. 46.

¹⁰³"Dàn is het geen tijd, om te zeggen tot God: 'aanschouw het verbond', maar het is de tijd om Hem te hooren roepen tot ons: doet gij maar liever naar het verbond'." (Schilder, *Ons aller moeder*, p. 30).

¹⁰⁴"Want *dàt* woordje 'nog' kan elke overspeelster ook zeggen, die 'nog' in huis haar huis-werk (het *opus operatum*) doet, behalve dan dit *ééne*: dat haar hart onverdeeld klopt voor den 'man'." (Schilder, *Ons aller moeder*, p. 46).

¹⁰⁵"Men denkt wel: verbondsprediking, dat is de mensen in slaap wiegen." (Schilder, *VWPreken II*, p. 325).

rather the opposite:

“The covenant is no longer seen as ‘the devil’s pillow’ where one is lulled to sleep. Rather, the covenant is the sharpest possible prod that humans can endure, it is the heating of the floors where one preaches in the name of the Lord. Accordingly, the judgment begins at the house of the Lord! That is covenantal language. The house of the Lord is no place for opium, but for the honing and whetting of swords for the judgment of the covenant.”¹⁰⁶

The echoes of Schilder’s 1918 sermon on “the judgment begins at the house of the Lord” (see section 2.2.4) now resound within a covenantal framework.¹⁰⁷

Theological Gain The concept of the covenant somewhat surprisingly entered the stage in the early thirties to become an important locus within Schilder’s entire theology. All that we have already seen as defining his idea of the church’s faithfulness is now incorporated into Schilder’s theology of the covenant. Schilder’s ecclesiology remains roughly the same, but is now embedded in a broader theological framework of the covenant. The question is now: what is the theological gain of this incorporation?

I believe that it reveals the degree to which the church was for Schilder the key theological locus. What he had already attempted in his Easter meditation on the church as ‘assembly’ and ‘congregation’ in 1932 is now provided with a theologically more robust rendering through the notion of the covenant. In that article, Schilder attempts to relate the history of the world (creation, fall, and redemption) in ecclesiological terms. The covenant is for Schilder, as we saw above, of utmost importance, the most fundamental concept of life. The fact that the church is, in his account, the circle of the covenant implies that the church is equally essential for the Christian life. It confirms once more that for Schilder the concrete and visible church is the essential means to be connected to God, to have a relationship with him. The connection also points once more to the church’s breadth. As in “Coetus et congregatio”, the history of the covenant is the history of God and the human race in the broadest sense. The close identification of the church with the covenant puts the church on the track of engagement with the world. With the covenant, Schilder has an overarching

¹⁰⁶“Wie het zo ziet, beschouwt het verbond niet als een oorkussen des duivels, waarop men zich gernakkelijk in slaap kan wiegen, maar als den scherpsten prikkel, dien de mens hebben kan, als het heet stoken van de vloeren, waarop men predikt in den naam des Heeren. Vandaar, dat het oordeel begint bij het huis des Heeren! Dat is verbondstaal. Er wordt geen opium bereid in het huis Gods. Maar de zwaarden, dàar gewet en gescherpt, zullen bediend worden bij het verbondsgericht.” (Schilder, *VWPreken II*, p. 326).

¹⁰⁷Schilder, *VWPreken I*, pp. 179-192.

framework that emphasizes the unity of God's dealings with humanity from creation down to the present day. Today we are part of the same one covenant that God sealed with Adam and Eve before the fall. Where it is difficult to date the church back before the fall, as we will see below (section 4.3.3), with the covenant that is less problematic. The covenantal framework with which Schilder dresses the church provides him with a thicker theological basis to account for the church as the hub of the Christian life and the center of world history.

Moreover, the covenant also points to the core notion of the *praesentia salutis*. The covenant helps Schilder to express God's deep involvement with humanity. This is also expressed in the notion of the *pactum salutis*. In this way, both God's sovereignty and his close involvement with humans, his salvific presence, are maintained: "All of history, with everything that stirs and moves, has in the 'counsel of peace' had God's attention before, in order to stay there forever."¹⁰⁸ With the covenant, God's presence becomes as concrete as possible, and it is realized through the cooperation of human beings. In the idea of the *pactum salutis*, Reformed theology has "provided the deepest ground for the fact that God is turned towards the cosmos, angels, and humans."¹⁰⁹ Later on, Schilder toned down his enthusiasm for the covenant of redemption for its 'scholastic associations'.¹¹⁰ The responsibility of the human race as a covenant partner receives a strong emphasis as an expression of God's concrete presence on earth.

Inward Covenant? Before I close this section, there is one question we still need to face. I have described Schilder's view on the covenant repeatedly as objective, outward, and visible. This may give the impression that the inward side of the covenant is undervalued by Schilder. That would imply that Schilder's early emphasis on the development of a Reformed spirituality, a 'true mysticism', gets lost in his aspirations for concreteness, objectivity, and visibility. As I have argued before, I do not believe that this inward reality comes to be lost in Schilder. Indeed, it does become increasingly difficult to find, and we look in vain for concrete recommendations in that area. However, when Schilder emphasizes the outward reality of the covenant and the church, this is not because he believed the inward reality to be unimportant. It was rather that he believed the outward

¹⁰⁸"Heel de geschiedenis, met al wat in haar zich roert en beweegt, is in den 'vrederaad' te voren voor de aandacht Gods geweest, om daarin eeuwig te blijven." (Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, p. 264) See also Schilder, *VWPreken II*, pp. 343-346.

¹⁰⁹"Zij heeft daarin aan Gods toegekeerd-zijn tot den cosmos, tot engel en tot mensch, zijn diepsten grond toegewezen." (Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, p. 264).

¹¹⁰K. Schilder. *Heidelbergsche catechismus: zondag 1-4*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1947, pp. 382-384. It is probable that Kuyper's use of the term in favor of Christ as the mediator of creation played a role here as well (Schilder, *HC II*, pp. 195-197).

realities to be under pressure and requiring of his attention. That the inward, spiritual side of these objective realities remain important is clear also in the later Schilder. Schilder understands the covenant primarily as a community, a feature we also saw in his ecclesiology. Covenant is communion; true communion is found only in the covenant.¹¹¹ When Schilder discusses how the covenant will ultimately be taken up into the *pactum salutis*, the eternal counsel of God, his language gains a jubilant tone. Here he speaks about “covenant joy”, and about how “Father, Son, and Spirit return to each other, rejoicing together eternally in the fulfillment of faithfulness.” And then Schilder stops, since “it is impossible to feel more shy, smaller and less capable of understanding”.¹¹²

Furthermore, the experiential or existential layer keeps reappearing with regard to the church. An example is the meditation from New Year’s Eve 1933.¹¹³ In this meditation, Schilder recalls a worship service from his youth, and reports how the singing of a particular Psalm stirred the congregation: “When that happened, everybody *felt* it: Something is *happening* now in our church: now we are *singing*. Then we ‘concluded’ (as if our emotion can be proof of edification): this is where the blessing descends. The organist did his very best. The hand of the man in front of me moved upward with every syllable. It was a sign that he was enjoying himself. Those who sang the second voice were *audible* as never before, more on cue than the boys’ choir in St. Matthew’s Passion. It was clear: That morning people believed that they were leaving church as blessed people.”¹¹⁴ It should be noted that this quote gives insight into Schilder’s conscience which, as a side note, warns him against these emotions. But emotions they were nonetheless, revealing something of the way Sunday worship was for Schilder a deeply emotional moment.

The simple fact, however, that this point needed to be made also demonstrates that the element of the inward covenant indeed loses in prominence. I do not doubt that *for Schilder* the inward covenant remained a powerful and even defining layer in his life and work. But *for those who read him*, it would

¹¹¹Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, pp. 237-238.

¹¹²“verbondsvreugde”, “nu keeren Vader, Zoon en Geest, tot elkander in, zich eeuwig met elkaar verblijdend in de vervulling van trouw”, and “verlegener kan zij zich niet voelen, niet verder in haar kleinheid en in haar onmacht-tot-verstaan.” (Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, p. 265). See also Schilder, *VWSchrift II*, pp. 17-18, where he fascinatingly combines experiential and juridical language when he speaks of the covenant.

¹¹³In general, we find Schilder rather melancholic in the New Year’s Eve meditations.

¹¹⁴“Ja, – en als ’t dan zó gebeurde, dan vóelde men: er gebeurt nu bij ons hier in de kerk iets: hier wordt gezóngen. En we ‘concludeerden’ dan (alsof onze emotie bewijs van stichting was): hier ‘valt zegen’. De organist deed meer dan gewoon zijn best. De hand van den man vóór me ging bij elke nieuwe syllabe even de hoogte in. Dat was een teken, dat hij ’t góed had. Wie tweede stem ‘zongen’, althans een andere ‘stem’, die kon men nu hóren, secuurder dan het knapenkoor bij een Matthäus-passion. Men kon er zéker van zijn, dat de mensen althans op zulk een morgen gelóófdén, dat ze gezégend de kerk uit gekomen waren.” (Schilder, *VWSchrift II*, p. 5).

become more and more difficult to hear, as it easily gets lost in the ever growing emphasis on the objective and outward side of covenant and church, combined with his criticism on subjectivity and pietism.

4.2.4 The Church and Salvation

I have now demonstrated how the covenant becomes an important category in Schilder's thought, and how he keeps the categories of church and covenant as closely together as possible. Schilder's criticism of the notion of the invisible church already begged the question of the way church relates to salvation and election. In Schilder's treatment of the covenant, we have seen the returning emphasis on the concrete and visible. I have also demonstrated that he does not identify covenant with election and salvation, as some in the Reformed tradition did. Rather, covenant and election are circles that partly overlap. The question we need to address in this section is how this works out in the church, the circle of the covenant.

While covenant and election are not circles that fully coincide, Schilder also cannot and does not separate them entirely. After all, the covenant is the channel of salvation, and thus this is true also for the church. A first question concerns the hypocrites in the church as well as the believers outside of the church. In January 1933 Schilder publicly responds to a matter that his readers have raised, asking him to comment on a text found in all the synoptic gospels ("Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters," Matt. 12:30 and parallels) in the light of the debates surrounding the doctrine of the church. Schilder's reply is straightforward: These texts "have nothing to do with the question of regeneration or true conversion"¹¹⁵ Earlier, in February 1932, Schilder had written that "Paul knew very well that the Spirit works among the Jews and the Greeks, also in places where A, B, and C had recognized his church and D, E, and F had not yet done so."¹¹⁶ In other words, the Spirit works in many places, also outside the church.¹¹⁷ Conversion, election, and salvation are not in question when it comes to the church. The church is where we gather around the Word and are gathered by Christ. The church is an actual, visible, and outward event.

¹¹⁵"dat zij met de vraag van wedergeboorte of waarachtige bekering niets te maken hebben" (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 214).

¹¹⁶"Welneen, Paulus wist wel, dat de Geest ook nog werkte in Joden, en Grieken, ook daar waar A, en B, en C 'zijn' kerk hadden erkend, en D en E en F het 'nog niet' hadden gedaan;" (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 154). Note, again, the pneumatological restriction Schilder proposes here.

¹¹⁷See also Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 208, Schilder, *Wat is de hel?*²³, p. 247 and Schilder, *HC II*, p. 437.

What, then, to make of the connection that the Belgic confession establishes between the church and salvation when it says in article 28: “Extra eam [ecclesiam] nulla sit salus”?¹¹⁸ It is not until 1946 that Schilder explicitly addresses this question.¹¹⁹ In an article written that year, Schilder returns to the dynamic element in his ecclesiology, in particular the notion that the church is unfinished. Schilder affirms the Belgic confession when it says there is no salvation outside of the church (and it is indeed hard to imagine Schilder not defending the confession). He also maintains, as we saw above, that the Belgic confession speaks only of the visible church. And, again, Schilder confirms that only a drunkard would say that nobody will be saved outside of the place where the individual believer gathers and meets Christ: “Outside of the church, where I gather with Christ, there certainly is salvation.”¹²⁰ This church, however, is unfinished. Christ still actively congregates his church. Some are only congregated by Christ at the moment of their death. That too is an act of Christ’s congregation of the church: “The congregation of the church does not happen outside of the earth and this temporary society, nor is it limited to it.”¹²¹ Thus, Schilder at one and the same time distinguishes between ecclesiology and soteriology, and also affirms their deep connection. Even though Schilder insists that this is no way to allow the invisible church in through the back door,¹²² it is difficult not see that happening in this ingenious construction.¹²³ Strictly speaking, Schilder is right to deny that suggestion, since those who are not part of a church during their lifetime, are, in Schilder’s construction, not part of an invisible church during that time. The construction, however, serves to tone down the rigor of a strict interpretation of the ‘*nulla salus extra ecclesiam*’ in precisely the same way as the invisible church does.

Up to this point I have treated salvation as an eschatological reality. For Schilder, however, salvation is also, and maybe primarily, an earthly reality. It should be recalled how in *Christ and Culture*, as well as in “Coetus et Congregatio”, the significance of the work of Christ is understood in earthly terms. Christ is for Schilder the second Adam and a return to the ‘ABC of creation’. Of course, creation is on its way to fulfillment in the eschaton.¹²⁴ Christ’s

¹¹⁸Bakhuizen van den Brink, *Belijdenisgeschriften*, p. 123 and Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, p. 418.

¹¹⁹Schilder, *VWKerk III*, pp. 244-251.

¹²⁰“Er is dus buiten de kerk, waar ik met Christus samenkom, wel degelijk zaligheid.” (Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 245).

¹²¹“De vergadering der kerk gaat niet buiten de aarde en de tijdelijke samenleving hier beneden om, maar gaat daar ook niet in op.” (Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 249).

¹²²Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 250.

¹²³See also Smit’s critique when he calls this a “strained argument, tailored to Schilder’s ecclesiology (Smit, “Gehoorzamen: achter Christus aan! Schilder over de kerk”, p. 86).

¹²⁴See Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*, pp. 269-322.

significance, however, lies for Schilder not primarily in—to use the words of N.T. Wright—a “ticket to heaven”. In 1932 Schilder remarks ironically about such an understanding of faith: “Furthermore, the sermon must be about how I am saved. My salvation means that I am later not left on the outside. Demands for this life? Surely you mean the life of the city, the school, the arts, literature, the church disputing with your church in the presence of God? Be wiser—I mean more edifying.”¹²⁵ In my discussion on the distinction between ‘assembly’ and ‘congregation’ in the previous chapter (section 3.2), I already suggested that Schilder understands the significance of Christ in creational and ecclesiological terms. This is not to say that Schilder denies that the cross means forgiveness of sins. That is something Schilder never denies.¹²⁶ The emphasis, however, falls on its cultural significance. In that respect it comes as no surprise to find Schilder asking his students: “...We should ask ourselves what the benefits of the covenant of grace are. Is it just sanctification, justification, and salvation? Or is it also, and even in the first place, about being part of a people that is set apart, or in other words, about being included in the climate of a congregation (not the sum) of believers?”¹²⁷ What Schilder treats here is the question at stake in the 1944 schism: are baptized children born again or not? Schilder’s suggestion is then twofold: On the one hand the covenant is disconnected from salvation, and on the other hand salvation is turned into a contemporaneous reality, thus emphasizing the connection between covenant, church, and salvation. Schilder openly suggests that the primary covenant benefit, that is, salvation, is being part of a church. In other words, being part of the church is itself, at least partly, salvation.

This almost postmodern, Hauerwasian notion is quite striking for a classical Reformed theologian like Schilder. It is understandable that we find it only in the form of a question in classroom notes. It does, however, perfectly fit Schilder’s thought, where the accent falls on the *praesentia salutis* in the ‘here and now’. It fits the early Schilder’s sermons, where the central question is how we stand before God today, in this place. The Christian life is about today. God is about now. His salvation is not only a future reality, it is a present reality. This

¹²⁵“Voorts moet de preek gaan over deze vraag: hoe word ik zalig? Mijn zaligheid betekent: dat ik straks er niet-buiten-blijf. Eisen voor DIT leven? U bedoelt: het leven van de straat, de school, de kunst, den roman, de tegen uw kerk bij God twistende andere kerk? Wees toch wijzer, – ik bedoel – stichtelijker.” (Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 147).

¹²⁶See, e.g., Schilder, *Licht in den rook*¹, p. 137 and K. Schilder. *Christus in zijn lijden: overwegingen van het lijdensevangelie II: Christus in den doorgang van zijn lijden*. 1st ed. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1930, pp. 484-501.

¹²⁷“...dat we ons moeten afvragen, wat de goederen van het genadeverbond zijn. Alleen maar heiligmaking, rechtvaardigmaking en zalig worden? Of ook, en zelfs primair, het staan in een afgezonderd volk, het opgenomen zijn in het klimaat van een vergadering (geen optelsom) van gelovigen?” (Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 77).

also sheds light on Schilder's dynamic understanding of the church. The church is like a wave that flows through history. This is what we are looking at today. These people belong to the church today, they are connected to Christ in the covenant. This is what it means to be saved right now, to partake in the benefits of the covenant of grace. That there are hypocrites within that wave, or people outside who eventually will return to the church, is not relevant. The relevant question for everyone is: am I following Christ today? Do I follow where he leads his church? If not, we have to move. Today is today, tomorrow is in the counsel of God, but not of our concern.

Here again, Schilder shows himself to be a child of his time. In navigating between Kuyper and Barth, Schilder leans towards the dialectical side, but in his own way. The emphasis on the here and now, resembling Kierkegaard and also Barth, aroused suspicion. It should come as no surprise that Schilder was met with critique. His critical followers were at least right to the point that Schilder indeed makes emphases that are different from what was common in the Reformed tradition.

4.2.5 True, Lawful, and Pure Church

Before I close this section, a final issue that needs our attention is that of the true church. This is a question that arises from Schilder's views on pluriformity. The question of ecclesial absolutism does not only occur in relation to those who are not in the church, as we saw above, it also occurs in relation to other churches. The doctrine of the pluriformity of the church offered a solution for this kind of ecclesial absolutism by relativizing the difference between the churches, affirming that there is more than one true church. With a view to a hierarchy of churches, the notion of the purity of the church was then introduced to account for the differences between different churches and to justify the division. The *Gereformeerde Kerken* were then seen as the purest church, while others were not referred to the realm of heresy, but rather taken to represent lower levels of purity.¹²⁸ As can be expected, Schilder was not fond of this distinction. For him there can only be one true church; two true churches is a contradiction in terms, even if a distinction according to levels of purity is added.¹²⁹ The discussion of this issue was best left to this place in the study,

¹²⁸Kuyper, *Tractaat*, pp. 167-178 (*ET* Kuyper, *The Church*, pp. 243-254) and Honig, *Dogmatiek*, pp. 726-731. Bavinck, not unlike Schilder, problematizes this distinction and has a nuanced position (Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 4, pp. 300-304, *ET*, H. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics Volume 4: Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation*. Ed. by J. Bolt. Trans. by J. Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008, pp. 316-319).

¹²⁹Schilder, *VW Kerk I*, p. 325.

since we can now build on what we have said about the church and salvation above.

I have repeatedly noted that the reception of Schilder's thought bore clear marks of influence from the churches that issued from the schism, the *Vrijmaking*, where he was the key figure. The common understanding of Schilder's ecclesiology is that he defended the notion of the true church as a reference to one particular church.¹³⁰ However, in Schilder's work up to the *Vrijmaking*, the notion of the true church is hardly central. The notion appears for the most part in the context of the pluriformity polemics, where Schilder attacks the application of the term 'true church' to multiple churches. One searches in vain, however, for a positive treatment of the significance of this notion.¹³¹ Particularly telling is the question students asked Schilder in 1942, towards the end of a cycle of lectures on the church: "Is the distinction between the true and the false church the same as the distinction between the lawful and the unlawful church, or is there a difference between a false and an unlawful church?"¹³² It was a logical question, given what Schilder had said. But in his lectures, the students had found no answer to that question.

It is thus clear that the notion of the true church is not a core issue for Schilder. But what does he say about it? On the one hand, Schilder clearly wants to maintain the category of the true church as it is found in the Belgic Confession.¹³³ In his pluriformity polemics, Schilder opposes the understanding of the true church as a reference to multiple churches.¹³⁴ However, he like other representatives of the neo-Calvinist tradition was reluctant to apply that exclusive label to a particular church. Schilder always avoids identifying the *Gereformeerde Kerken* as the true church, and even explicitly denies that this

¹³⁰Sec, e.g., Smit, "Gehoorzamen: achter Christus aan! Schilder over de kerk", p. 83, who criticizes Schilder for this idea. See the lecture by E. T. van den Born in: E. T. van de Born and C. Veenhof. *De Kerk: referaten gehouden op de Bondsdag Rotterdam 1948*. Utrecht: Ned. Bond van (vrijgemaakte) Jongelingsverenigingen op Geref. Grondslag, 1948, as an example of the understanding of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* as the true church.

¹³¹Schilder's "Theses concerning the church", considered as a summary of his core convictions, mentions the notion only a single time, and even then in parentheses; see Schilder, *VWKerk II*, pp. 245-250. In *Ons aller moeder*, the notion is altogether absent. In his more systematic treatments in the classroom, the notion is practically absent as well, apart from the historical sections (Schilder, *Dictaat credo* and Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*). The latter lectures were to be the basis for Schilder's own "Locus de Ecclesia" (Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 118). Note also that Buys's description of Schilder's understanding of the true church uniquely refers to articles dating from after 1944 (Buys, *Sodat hulle een kan wees*, pp. 111-118).

¹³²"Loopt de tegenstelling tussen ware en valse kerk parallel met die tussen wettige en onwettige kerk of is er een verschil tussen valse en een onwettige kerk?" (Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 121).

¹³³Article 29 reads: "We believe that we ought to discern diligently and very carefully, by the Word of God, what is the true church".

¹³⁴Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 303-307, 317-321.

is the case.¹³⁵ One reason Schilder objects to such concrete labeling is that a church in one nation can by definition never be the true church, since there are also churches in other countries.¹³⁶ The other reason is that such a statement suggests an empirical method. The entire project of applying the name 'true church' to a particular church is paradoxical since the true church is not a matter of divine approbation, but rather a divine task.¹³⁷ It is Schilder's emphasis on the dynamic aspect of the church that keeps him from a concrete application of the label of the true church. This reflects the way he applied it above to those outside of the church. Schilder does affirm, however, that ever since 1892 we have a "great light" in the Dutch context. He adds that we should be careful not to disregard history in that respect. But even such a statement is followed by the warning that "the light of the candlestick can be moved".¹³⁸

On the other hand, when Schilder is pushed by his students, as described above, he responds like this:

"The term 'false church' and the term 'true church' are in the [Belgic] Confession a description of universal tendency. The church is thus described according to its assembly in the entire cosmos. 'Lawful' is an attribute of the institution. This means that the institution is a lawful succession of the apostles and prophets. In this context, I would rather speak of institution than of church."¹³⁹

This is a helpful answer. It now becomes clear that Schilder makes a distinction between the notions of 'lawful' and 'true', and prefers to use the former in connection with a concrete institution. This explains why Schilder shuns the notion of 'true', and speaks of the 'lawful church' a great deal more often.¹⁴⁰ In an article from 1935, however, Schilder seems to identify the lawful and true church.¹⁴¹ The point of the article is, however, as in the quote above,

¹³⁵Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 441.

¹³⁶Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 433.

¹³⁷Schilder, *VWKerk I*, pp. 202-202. Note also how Schilder similarly understands election as a responsibility (Schilder, *Christus in zijn lijden I'*, p. 194).

¹³⁸Schilder, *VWKerk I*, p. 209.

¹³⁹"...dat het woord 'valse kerk' evenals het woord 'ware kerk' in de Confessie een benaming is van universele tendenz. Zo wordt de ware kerk beschreven naar het verzameld zijn over de hele kosmos. Wettig is een praedicaat van het instituut en het betekent, dat een instituut voortzetting is van de successie van apostelen en profeten. K.S. [Schilder] spreekt in dit verband liever van instituut dan van kerk." (Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, pp. 121-122).

¹⁴⁰Smit's critical article would have benefited from a more careful discernment on this issue. As proof for Schilder's local understanding of the *true* church, Smit refers to articles before 1944 where Schilder only discusses the *lawful* church (Smit, "Gehoorzamen: achter Christus aan! Schilder over de kerk", p. 83).

¹⁴¹"En daarom moet tegen die secten uit Gods Woord worden afgeleid, welke de ware kerk is, dat wil dus zeggen, de wettige, en de daarin zuivere." Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 262.

that the lawfulness of the church rather than its purity is the essential category. The purity is, again, a matter of arguing from sight, rather than from faith: “The *Gereformeerde Kerken* can degenerate, but as long as she does not officially acknowledge the ‘mess’, she is still lawful, despite her impurity.”¹⁴²

What this makes clear at least is that Schilder’s understanding of the true church reveals the core tension of his ecclesiology between the static and the dynamic. For this period what Berkouwer writes is true, namely that the conclusion that the *Gereformeerde Kerken* is the true church was “too static for him and fails to appreciate that the Church proceeds in the midst of many dangers that threaten her true being.”¹⁴³ Schilder did readily apply the notion of the lawful church to concrete institutions, but he never did so with that of the true church. The true church seems indeed to be more of a tendency in which the dynamic and open-ended character of the church is included.

Whether or not this distinction is tenable or not is yet another question. For now, it for the most part seems reflective of immature thought that begs more questions. For what is the difference between the notions of ‘lawful’ and ‘true’? Is this a way of relativizing the Belgic Confession when it says that we have to “discern from the Word of God what is the true church”?¹⁴⁴ And does that not contradict all that Schilder has said to promote the concrete and visible institution? Does this amount to yet another recourse to the invisible church? The next period will provide some answers and a slight shift in Schilder’s thought, but still leave these questions largely unanswered.

4.2.6 In Sum

In the period that is the focus of this chapter, Schilder’s writings on the church’s distinct nature focus on the unity of the church over against the ideological and political tensions of his time. Schilder’s emphasis on the concrete institution causes him to distance himself from the invisibility of the church.

New in this period is the notion of the covenant, which quickly goes on to assume a central position in Schilder’s thought. In terms of content not much changes, since the covenant simply takes the shape of what Schilder has said about the church thus far. The three key developments (covenant, the invisible church, and pluriformity) place Schilder in a position of increasing tension over against the Kuyperian establishment. In that sense too it is a time of increasing tensions.

¹⁴²“De Gereformeerde kerk kan verbasteren, maar zolang ze de ‘janboel’ niet officieel ijkt, is ze wettig, ondanks haar onzuiverheid.” (Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 122).

¹⁴³Berkouwer, *The Church*, p. 21 (Dutch original: Berkouwer, *De Kerk I*, p. 22).

¹⁴⁴Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, p. 419.

The relationship between the church and salvation, as well as the question of the true church, were not particular to this period, but have been discussed at this point of our study because the new notion of the covenant helps us in presenting Schilder's views on the matter. We gain a better understanding of the relationship between salvation and the church as a result of it. The nature of Schilder's view on this relationship has yielded us his tentative suggestion that salvation is to be understood at least in part in ecclesial terms. Schilder is reluctant to apply the label of the true church to the concrete visible institution. This reluctance is most helpful in confirming what is again an increasing tension between the dynamic and the static in Schilder's ecclesiology. It is this tension that will return with full force in the next period, when Schilder's ideas will be put to the test.

It remains clear that a distinct church remains a top priority for Schilder: a church that is one, visible, and lawful. That church is the circle of the covenant, which is the heart of the Christian life.

4.3 Public Church

I have now indicated the developments in this period with regard to the distinct character of the church, Schilder's concern for the 'depth' element of theology. I will now turn to the 'breadth' as it is developed in this decade. As was true for the previous section, the increasing tensions on various levels play a key role. There is increased distance from Kuyper on commonness and on the church as organism. So too the confrontation with national socialism will provide insight into Schilder's developing view on the church's public role.

In this section, I will first elaborate on Schilder's views on the relationship between God and the world, following up on the section on Christ and culture in the previous chapter (section 3.4.1). Then I will examine three elements where Schilder's writings on the public role of the church provide new insights. The third of these is a practical 'case' in Schilder's encounter with national socialism, first as a political party in the Netherlands and then, after May 1940, as embodied by the German occupiers.

4.3.1 On God and the World

An important theological issue undergirding the church's engagement with the world is the question of the relationship between God and the world. In the previous chapter, we occasionally already touched on this matter. Especially in the central notion of the *praesentia salutis* we saw Schilder articulating it in the post-World War I context and over against the theology of Karl Barth. There we described how Schilder sought to keep God and history as close together as

possible, without losing the transcendence of God. God must be understood as both immanent and transcendent, we repeatedly heard Schilder affirming. Moreover, in the sections on Christ and culture in both chapters, we saw Schilder's commitment to the Christian's engagement with this world. God's involvement with the world is paralleled by the command to every Christian, and to the church, to make the highest priority of engagement with the world. At the same time, I have repeatedly stressed the radical starting point in faith and Christ that Schilder shares with Barth. We have seen the hints and allusions in Schilder's early years developing into a greater distance from his own tradition on the point of commonness (common grace, general revelation, natural law, etc.).

These developments demand a more profound reflection insofar as they pertain to the relationship between God and the world and to the consequences for commonness. I framed Schilder's development in this period as a navigation between Kuyper and Barth. On the issue of the God-world relationship, that navigation is most clearly visible. This period provides us with a number of more fundamental accounts where we are granted greater insight into Schilder's views. These accounts can be found, among others, in *Wat is de hemel?*¹, *HC* 1939, and his classroom notes on the doctrine of God, *Kompendium Dogmatiek*. Even though this period extends only to the schism of 1944, I will use also the second printing and subsequent volumes of his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism, even though they were published between 1947 and 1953. For the next chapter, to which they more properly belong, will focus on the schism and its consequences, and dwell less on theological reflection as such.

A full treatment of the larger question of the relationship between God and the world is beyond the scope of this study. In what follows, I will try to give a basic impression of Schilder's take on the matter. The questions that I will try to answer are: How does Schilder develop his mantra that God is to be understood as both immanent and transcendent? And, in the subsequent section, what is the consequence for his view on commonness? What will happen at the consummation of the world? The answers to these questions are of considerable importance for the church's engagement with the world.

Schilder's seminal book on eschatology, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, is an attempt to answer precisely this question, while navigating between Barth and Kuyper, who both figure as conversation partners.¹⁴⁵ In this book, Schilder attempts to tie

¹⁴⁵Although there is an abridged English translation of *Wat is de hemel?*¹, *Heaven, What Is It?*, its condensed character makes it of no use for the present discussion. The English version amounts to less than a third of the original, making it a more summary than an abridgement. For example, the discussions with Barth, Althaus, and Kuyper have been left out in their entirety (K. Schilder. *Heaven, What Is It?* Trans. by M. M. Schoolland. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1950).

two major strands of his thought together. The first is the 'Kuyperian' pursuit to overcome any form of dualism in theology. As Schilder repeatedly remarks, the only tension in the Christian life is that between grace and *sin*. Nature, creation, or the world itself are not in any way opposed to God or, by consequence, to the Christian. It is merely the sin in that world that is responsible for tension and antithesis. On this point Schilder's opponent is dialectical theology. Its Kierkegaardian distinction between time and eternity creates a deep dualism on the wrong spot, between grace and *nature*. The other strand is Schilder's sympathy with the Barthian endeavor expressed in its criticism of Hegel: "We completely agree with Barth and Kierkegaard in their rejection of Hegel. [...] The line between God and creature can never be crossed by us. [...] God does not 'need' the world in order to know himself."¹⁴⁶ As I argued at length in the previous chapter, Schilder's agreement with Barth runs at a deeper level than he himself acknowledges, and runs parallel with his criticism of Kuyper.¹⁴⁷ As much as Schilder wants to avoid dualism, he also seeks to avoid identifying God with the world. Schilder wants both immanence and transcendence. His criticism of common grace as it begins to manifest itself during this period, also in *Wat is de hemel?*, is an expression of this same concern. In 1938 Schilder started on the first edition of his commentary of the Heidelberg Catechism.¹⁴⁸ In this first edition, which spans question and answer one through seventeen, we see Schilder emphasizing this clear distinction: He denies the possibility of common ground in the realm of epistemology, refuses the possibility of apologetics, and rejects natural theology and general revelation (see further below). Schilder seeks to bring Kuyper's anti-dualist theology of culture through the crisis of Karl Barth and his radical breach between time and eternity, between God and humans. How is God really present in this world, and at the same time radically different from it? How can the important emphasis of dialectical theology be incorporated within the neo-Calvinist tradition? That is Schilder's question in *Wat is de hemel?*

Wat is the hemel? has origins dating back to the early years of Schilder's pastorate, when he gave lectures on hell and heaven. His lectures on hell were published around that time, but those on heaven remained on his shelf until they were finally published in 1935. A newspaper report on one of those lectures on heaven in 1919 reveals that many key ideas of the 1935 edition were already

¹⁴⁶"Het behoeft geen betoog dat wij het Kierkegaard en Barth volkomen eens zijn in de feitelijke afwijzing van Hegel. [...] dat immers de grens tusschen God en scheepsel nimmer overschreden kan worden door ons; [...] Dat God de wereld niet 'noodig' heeft, om zich zelf te kennen [...]" (Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, p. 59).

¹⁴⁷See Kuitert, *De mensvormigheid Gods*, pp. 110-114, who completely identifies Schilder and Barth on this point.

¹⁴⁸Schilder, *HC 1939*.

present, again confirming my thesis of consistency throughout Schilder's oeuvre and the absence of a real influence from Barth, as I have argued elsewhere.¹⁴⁹ The idea of the history of heaven, the emphasis on the remaining distinction between God and humans, and heaven as sabbath where city and garden come together, are all present. However, the key elements of 'shock' and the 'point of time' are clearly later developments. Moreover, as with his other publications, Schilder ended up toning down his endorsement of Dante. In 1919 Schilder had praised Dante for "the most beautiful of all attempts to describe heaven", notwithstanding "many things we cannot accept".¹⁵⁰ By 1935 his praise has evaporated, and he only writes: "Dante's mysticism is shattered to pieces with a single blow from Reformed doctrine's direct 'song' on heaven."¹⁵¹

It is no coincidence that Schilder's lecture on heaven developed into his central book dealing with the above question on the incorporation of dialectical elements into the neo-Calvinist framework. Schilder argues that there is only one heaven, which is the created dwelling place of God. When God created the earth, he also created heaven as a dwelling place for himself and for his servants, the angels. Just like earth, heaven has a history with different phases. In this book, Schilder's focus is on the last part of the history of heaven, after the final day, when its history is put to rest in eternity, as Schilder puts it.¹⁵² Heaven will then be expanded to form a unity with the new earth: God will dwell among his people. There are two novel notions in Schilder's account that serve to answer the integration of the early Schilder's dialectics into the Kuyperian view on nature and grace. These are the historicity of heaven, and the distinction between shock and evolution.

Schilder's notion of the history of heaven is in line with the Reformed understanding of heaven as something created, but its separate treatment is novel. He uses the idea to further substantiate his position with regard to dialectical theology's emphasis on the radical gulf separating God and the human race, time and eternity. Schilder had repeatedly insisted that Reformed theology must always speak of both God's immanence and transcendence, and that Barth's adoption of Kierkegaard sacrifices the former for the latter. Over against the Kierkegaardian "God is in heaven and humans are on earth", Schilder affirms that this biblical text (Ecclesiastes 5:1) does not stress the distance between God

¹⁴⁹See my forthcoming article on the early Barth and the early Schilder in a collection edited by George Harinck and Dirk van Keulen.

¹⁵⁰"De meest schoon van alle pogingen is het gedicht van Dante over het paradijs of den hemel [...] Het is wel schoon, maar er zijn nog veel dingen in die wij niet kunnen aanvaarden." (Schilder, *VWI7-19*, pp. 474-475).

¹⁵¹"Want nu breekt met één slag heel Dante's (en anderer) mystiek stuk op deze directen hémel-zang van het gereformeerde dogma." (Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, p. 319).

¹⁵²Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, p. 73.

and humankind, but how close they really are. To affirm that God is in heaven is to affirm that God is part of his creation, part of history and time. God has entered time in his own created heaven. The mere fact that God descends and that he is at a distance, as the Bible says, implies that God and humans share the same space, the space of creation and history. In this space, however, there is a clear distance between God and man that God has put there. As such, Schilder echoes the Chalcedonian distinction: God and this world are never to be separated, even though they must be clearly distinguished. God is eternal, and above and outside of time: he is distinct from his creation. God also entered history, making it his dwelling place: he cannot be separated from his creation. This same heaven is the realm to which Christ has ascended, and from which he now rules with his human body. On the final day, heaven and earth together will be renewed and merged together. God's dwelling place will be with humankind. This does not imply that the distinction between God and man will cease to exist. As in the present phase of the history of heaven, our knowledge of God depends on revelation. This revelation, however, will be more intense and richer than it is now. There will be no more Scripture, no more sacraments, no more nature, but it will still be revelation. Thus Schilder attempts to show how God is immanent in his creation, while still at a distance from it.¹⁵³

If this account gives the impression that Schilder is eradicating the distinction between God and creation, that stands in need of correction. There is, as we have heard Schilder repeatedly emphasize against Barth, the dichotomy brought about by sin. Over against Barth's supposed dualism of time and eternity, Schilder places that of sin and grace. There is, however, more that distinguishes God and humankind. In the dogmatics classes he taught at the Kampen school from 1937 onwards, Schilder treats the doctrine of God. There he teaches the doctrine of God by discussing the qualities traditionally ascribed to God: simplicity, aseity, eternity, infinity, immutability, etc. Schilder offers a powerful defence of these classical notions of God against their modern relativization. In doing so, Schilder does not cease emphasizing how radically God differs from his creation and from human beings. His God is timeless, his *aeternitas* is different from the *aeivernitas* of his creation.¹⁵⁴ A returning feature of Schilder's doctrine of God is his adoption of Boethius's (480-524) definition of divine eternity as "interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio", the total, simultaneous, and perfect possession of interminable life. This is how God's eternity (*aeternitas*) is radically different from ours: God equally possesses all things at the same time. Our eternity (*aeivernitas*) only means a long duration.¹⁵⁵ Boethius's

¹⁵³Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*²¹, pp. 113-150.

¹⁵⁴K. Schilder. *Kompendium dogmatiek deel VII*. ed. by D. v. H. Verlare J. and G. van Rongen. 1st ed. Kampen: Fides Quaerit Intellectum, 1941, pp. 257-268.

¹⁵⁵K. Schilder. *Kompendium dogmatiek deel VI*. ed. by J. Verlare et al. 1st ed. 1941, pp. 229-239

definition also implies that God is immutable. Since there is no succession, no development, and no time in God, it is impossible for him to be affected by any external influence whatsoever.¹⁵⁶ This also leads to the confession of God as simple: God possesses all in equal manner; there are no parts of which he is constituted that could be separated from one another.¹⁵⁷ All this makes abundantly clear that Schilder's understanding of God is marked by an understanding of his radical distinctiveness from creation. In the lectures from after the war, Schilder discusses God's transcendence. This discussion is very brief because, as he argues, God's transcendence only describes him in relation to his creation. Since God exists independently of his creation, this cannot be properly discussed as a quality of God.¹⁵⁸ In his subsequent discussion of God's omnipresence, Schilder makes a similar move. The prefix 'omni' is misleading because it suggests a connection to his creation in his character. Rather, Schilder opts for a definition of a "free and lively power of providence" to describe God's omnipresence.¹⁵⁹ All of this is to argue that Schilder does all he can to distinguish God from his creation. As he puts it in his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism's discussion of God the Creator, God creates the world as a free decision of a Father, not as a source of emanation. God's immanence in his creation is a free and contingent choice, just as the continued existence of creation is a permanent free choice of God.¹⁶⁰

The second notion is Schilder's idea of evolution and shock. When God created the world, Schilder writes in *Wat is de hemel?*, he created a world that was meant to develop with gradual evolution and with moments of shock. There was to be evolution in the activity of humans as God's co-workers, hence the essential mandate God gave people just after they were created. Gradual evolution, however, would not bring the world to rest in the final phase God had intended for it from the beginning. This is where the moments of shock come in, moments of divine intervention that move creation forward. These moments of shock are part of the fabric of creation, and as such they exist irrespective of sin's entrance into the world. In fact, the days of creation were also such moments where God intervened directly.¹⁶¹ The day of final consummation will be yet another such moment. As on the days of creation, it will be the same earth, the same creation, but that creation will undergo a dramatic change. There will

and Schilder, *HC III*, pp. 110-132.

¹⁵⁶Schilder, *Kompendium dogmatiek VII*, pp. 287-306.

¹⁵⁷K. Schilder. *Kompendium dogmatiek deel V*. ed. by J. Verlare and D. van Houdt. 1st ed. 1940, pp. 23-32.

¹⁵⁸K. Schilder. *Kompendium dogmatiek deel IX*. ed. by J. F. C. J. Breen and C. Trimp. 1st ed. 1947, pp. 19-20.

¹⁵⁹"actuosa ac liberrima vis providentiae" (Schilder, *Kompendium dogmatiek IX*, p. 50). See also on God's presence, Schilder, *HC IV*, pp. 148-215.

¹⁶⁰Schilder, *HC III*, pp. 200-212.

¹⁶¹Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*, pp. 122-133.

be no more digestion and no more sexuality, so Schilder concludes from the New Testament (Matthew 22:30; 1 Corinthians 6:13).¹⁶² It will be completely beyond our imagination, but “the very same earth where the Son of God planted his cross and where he broke through into life will be the place where he, with the glorified, will again dwell on that future day.”¹⁶³ While emphasizing the aspect of continuity in matters of eschatology, Schilder ends up criticizing any proposal that seeks to describe the nature of this continuity. He is thus critical of Kuyper’s and Bavinck’s understanding of the way the earthly treasures will be brought into the new earth (Revelation 21:24). This, Schilder says, disregards the new earth’s radical difference with respect to the present.¹⁶⁴

We have now seen how Schilder continues his attempt to maintain the balance between God’s immanence and transcendence. With the idea of a God who enters history in a part of creation that is distant from this history, together with his notion of the development of creation through shock and evolution, Schilder produces a kind of creational dualism. It is creational in the sense that he emphasizes the unity of creation (heaven and earth) and the continuity between the two sides of the eschaton. It is a dualism nonetheless in the sense that God’s dwelling place is at a distance from our dwelling place, and that the *jenseits* of history will be of a radically different nature through the element of shock. These are all aspects that exist irrespective of the fall. With this, Schilder alters his tradition to bring it in line with the Barthian emphasis on the discontinuity between this world and God. While Schilder remains firmly on neo-Calvinist ground in maintaining the unity between God and world, between this world and the eschaton, he does present a conception that emphasizes the breach between God and this world, the breach Barth so sought to emphasize.¹⁶⁵

4.3.2 On Commonness

If the relationship between God and the world is marked by both distance and proximity, and if the eschaton will be marked by discontinuity, one might ask how Schilder views the notions of commonness existing in his Reformed

¹⁶²Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, pp. 59-70.

¹⁶³“Dezelfde aarde, waarin Gods eigen Zoon zijn kruis geplant heeft, en tot het leven doorgebroken is, zal straks de plaats zijn, waar Hij, met zijn verheerlijkten, weder intrek neemt in den dag der toekomst.” (Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, p. 195).

¹⁶⁴Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, pp. 282-307.

¹⁶⁵See, similarly, Kamphuis, “Inleiding”, pp. 15-17. Kamphuis notes that Schilder’s “theology of history” was ahead of his time in confronting Barth in this manner. A theology of history is precisely what was to be developed as a reaction to Barth in the second half of the twentieth century by such theologians as Hendrikus Berkhof (1914-1995), Jürgen Moltmann (1926), and Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928-2014) (Kamphuis, “Inleiding”, p. 12). See in the same line, but more extensively, Kamphuis, “De geschiedenis: vicieus of lumineus?”, pp. 90-118.

tradition. There is commonness between believer and non-believer in their knowledge of and access to the work of God. Reformed theology had distanced itself from the Roman Catholic notions of natural theology and natural law, to Schilder's approval.¹⁶⁶ However, the Reformed tradition had allowed for notions of commonness in the concepts of general revelation, the image of God, and, later, common grace. These were all attempts to affirm a continuity between God and the world after the fall, and thus possibilities to connect the church and the world, rooted in the doctrine of creation. In the first chapter I showed that the criticism on Hauerwas's sectarianism centered on the notion of creation. In that light, Schilder's take on these issues is vital for the conversation.

As I hinted before, Schilder is very critical on all existing notions of commonness. Not only does he find fault with the relatively recent concept of common grace, he also distances himself from commonness in the image of God and general revelation. The classical proof text for general revelation, Romans 2:15, is even interpreted by Schilder in such a way that it can no longer support notions of commonness. He does not deny that there are remnants that have been left to us from creation, explaining why people still often act according to God's law. He is, however, quick to add that such knowledge is not even close to salvific knowledge or any other positive construction, let alone that we can call it 'common grace'.¹⁶⁷ Since our research focuses on the engagement with the world and not on revelation, the matter is better left aside in favor of Schilder's critique on common grace.

Common Grace In the passage in the previous chapter where I discussed Schilder's essay on Christ and culture, we already saw how he, in his concern to advance the Kuyperian cultural program, made a shift from common grace to common mandate. In the course of the thirties, Schilder becomes increasingly critical and ends up rejecting the idea altogether.¹⁶⁸ Schilder's initial problem with common grace was its function as an idea that to his mind had the result

¹⁶⁶Schilder, *Kompendium ethiek. Deel VI*, pp. 6-31 and Schilder, *HC 1939*, pp. 70-99.

¹⁶⁷Schilder, *HC 1939*, pp. 70-99.

¹⁶⁸See the excellent book on this topic by Douma, *Algemene genade*, pp. 185-203 (*ET* Douma, *Common Grace*, pp. 210-232), for a detailed account of Schilder's development with regard to common grace. For a clear sign of this development, compare the 1932 article on Christ and culture and the 1948 publication on common grace. In 1932 Schilder writes: "It is one-sided to characterize the problem of Christ and culture as a problem of common grace. Oh no, it is not our intention to criticize this doctrine, although we do believe that it needs to be complemented and partly corrected in the way it is often presented." ("...dat het eenzijdig is, het vraagstuk van Christus en cultuur te typeeren als een vraagstuk van 'gemeene gratie'. O neen, wij willen geen critik hier oefenen op dit leerstuk, al meenen wij dat het aanvulling noodig heeft, ten deel ook, in den vorm, warin het vaak werd voorgedragen, correctie." (Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", p. 277)) In 1948 this has become: "Even within the framework of inexact, non-scientific, popular use, it is definitely incorrect to characterize the problem of 'Christ and

of allowing people to escape God's commands. Here we recognize the early emphasis on obedience that Schilder made in his sermons. He does not see culture primarily as a given or as a gift, but as a mandate. Now another layer is added to this critique, which made Schilder discard the idea altogether. That critique focused on Kuyper's fundamental understanding of the continuation of time after the fall as grace, common grace.¹⁶⁹ This idea is problematic, so Schilder insists, because it fails to incorporate the fact that the continuation of time also creates the possibility for God's wrath. This is in line with the earlier notion of common judgment which Schilder placed over against common grace. Time is merely the substratum of grace and wrath, as Schilder calls it from 1942 onwards.¹⁷⁰ Common grace is, for him, ultimately an anthropocentric concept. It focuses on what humans can enjoy in culture, while the only question should be what God wants. And that, Schilder says, happens to be his cultural mandate given before the fall. Common grace is anthropocentric, the common mandate is theocentric.¹⁷¹

The Image of God With regard to the image of God, Schilder makes a similar alteration. The image of God should not be understood as if there were a number of properties or qualities in every human being that reflect God. According to such an account, there still remain in every human being parts of that image even after the fall. These then function as a point of contact for every person, explaining why many still act in accordance with God's law. The remaining image of God can even function, like common grace, as a means to positively appreciate elements among unbelievers, and thus to cooperate with them. Schilder prefers rather to understand the image of God in connection with the command to rule the earth. He points to the fact that in the Genesis narrative, the statement that humans are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) is immediately followed by the command to fulfil and subdue the earth (Gen 1:28). In other words, the image of God is about our office. This is how God will remain visible on earth, how his image is reflected on earth, through human activity.¹⁷² "Thus, also with the doctrine of the image of God one has to adhere to the idea of the office and

culture' as a problem of 'common grace'" (K. Schilder. *Christ and Culture*. Trans. by W. Helder and A. Oosterhoff. Hamilton: Lucerna, 2015, p. 142). ("dat het zelfs binnen het kader an een onnauwkeurig, niet-wetenschappelijk, populair spraakgebruik bepaald onjuist is, het vraagstuk van 'Christus en cultuur' te typeeren als een vraagstuk van 'gemeene gratie'" (Schilder, *Christus en cultuur*, p. 97).).

¹⁶⁹Schilder, *Dictaat Americana*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁷⁰Schilder, *Is de term algemeene genade wetenschappelijk verantwoord?*, pp. 26, 48-51 and Schilder, *Christus en cultuur*, p. 64 (ET Schilder, *Christ and Culture*, p. 91).

¹⁷¹Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, pp. 282-307.

¹⁷²Schilder, *HC 1939*, pp. 210-231.

let that idea prevail.”¹⁷³ Schilder’s understanding of the image of God is another example of how Schilder develops parallel to Barth, in contrast with Kuyper.¹⁷⁴

The degree to which Schilder’s altered conception of the image of God bears resemblance to his idea of the cultural mandate as an alternative to common grace is striking. In both the passive commonness is changed to greater activity. Both make the notion of office the heart of the matter. In both notions human activity and responsibility becomes central. There is not so much a given (common grace, image) as there is a mandate (common mandate, command to be the image). By now, the characteristic emphasis on responsibility has become a familiar one in Schilder. Everywhere the modern notion of individual, human responsibility is central: in the church, in the covenant, and in matters of culture. Schilder’s critique on commonness as common grace is that it asks the wrong question. It asks: How can we appreciate, how can we enjoy? What we should be asking is rather: what must we do? Common grace is, again, seen by Schilder as a ‘trick’ to escape the weight of the divine mandate, just as pluriformity did for the unity of the church.¹⁷⁵

In his discussion of the image of God, Schilder calls the old view on the image of God too static: “People are able to represent God here below, not in static beauty, but in the living duty of office.”¹⁷⁶ “It is part of a living relationship with the covenant God”.¹⁷⁷ Schilder’s dynamic view, it should be noted, pertains to the heart of his theology, including notions of commonness. Not only the church is a dynamic entity, the whole of Christian life is to be understood dynamically. This is accompanied by his emphasis on the unicity or once-ness (*eenmaligheid*) of history.¹⁷⁸ There are no ‘static givens’, because we stand in a living relationship with the living God within the framework of the covenant. We do not need commonness outside of this living relationship in order to engage with the world or to cooperate with others. We only need God’s mandate and his grace to enable us to do so. The only thing that matters is the present and how we stand before God. It is not as if Schilder would say

¹⁷³“Zóó dient men óók bij de leer van het beeld Gods altijd weer de ambtsgedachte vast te houden en op den voorgrond te plaatsen” (Schilder, *HC 1939*, p. 217).

¹⁷⁴See Barth, *KD III/1*, pp. 205-214, taken up by Mouw, *Adventures in Evangelical Civility*, pp. 20-23, who points to similarities with Kuitert.

¹⁷⁵See how Schilder writes that the notions of office and mandate with regard culture do more justice to the tension of the Sermon on the Mount than common grace manages to do (“De ‘aanpak’ van cultuurvragen bij de ‘gemeene-gratie-leer’” in: *De Reformatie* 13-18, p. 139 (February 3, 1933)).

¹⁷⁶“Want niet in een statische pracht, doch in levenden ambtsdienst is de mensch in staat God af te beelden, hier beneden, in het zijne.” (Schilder, *HC 1939*, p. 242).

¹⁷⁷“Het is opgenomen in een levend verkeer met God als Verbondsgod.” (Schilder, *HC 1939*, p. 242).

¹⁷⁸Schilder, *VWSchrift I*, pp. 441-449.

that everything outside of the church is bad; rather, he calls it “the substratum for curse and for blessing”.¹⁷⁹ Every moment this substratum can potentially be used for good or for bad. In this dynamic, actual view of the Christian life, the church, and the covenant, the early Schilder’s sermons where every listener was placed before God come to theological fruition. As I will show below, it is in the doctrine of God, that the tension between the static and the dynamic church is ultimately resolved, at least theoretically (see for this tension section 3.3.3). For a God who possesses all things equally at the same time, there is no tension between static and dynamic.

Common Temperance and Cooperation Does this mean that Schilder distances himself from all notions of commonness? And does this imply that he ends up not only with a distinct church, but also a distinct Christian culture? Is the fear of an isolated Christian culture, as expressed by both Van Ruler and Douma (see section 3.4.1), a just concern?¹⁸⁰ I believe this not to be the case, even though Schilder’s thought can easily veer off in that direction, as the history of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* following the 1944 schism exemplifies.

Schilder inserts two elements where some kind of common ground is acknowledged. Indeed, this is no common ground in the sense that knowledge of God is somehow available outside of special revelation. There is, however, a kind of practical common ground. This is what Schilder introduces in the expanded book edition of his original 1932 article on Christ and culture: common temperance. In the above, I used the 1948 book edition as an example of Schilder’s changing posture towards common grace. In this edition, he replaced common grace with what he calls ‘common temperance’.¹⁸¹ When Kuyper wonders why death did not occur immediately after the fall, that is not a matter of common grace, so Schilder writes, but of the simple fact that, since God *wants* to continue history, he restrains both judgment and grace. History has not yet evolved into heaven and hell.

This temperance, then, provides the rationale for the second element which is Schilder’s distinction between *sunousia* (being together) and *koinonia* (fellowship). This pair will be discussed in greater detail in section 5.3.2, but for now it is important to note that Schilder’s view of concrete culture is a mixture of Christians and non-Christians alike, that is *sunousia*. Because the material we use is the same and because God’s final judgment is still withheld, the result is not a separate Christian culture, but a mixed reality: “Those who

¹⁷⁹Schilder, *Is de term algemeene genade wetenschappelijk verantwoord?*, p. 49.

¹⁸⁰Ruler, *Kuyper’s idee eener christelijke cultuur*, pp. 13-17, 116-124 and Douma, “Christus en cultuur”, pp. 190-192.

¹⁸¹Schilder, *Christus en cultuur*, pp. 61-62, 77-84 (*ET* Schilder, *Christ and Culture*, pp. 87-89, 113-119).

serve God and those who do not serve him are not geographically separated in the world.”¹⁸² Schilder at this point affirms the existence of the *lumen naturae* from the Canons of Dort,¹⁸³ albeit with parenthetical caveats: “There will still always remain (for believing observers, in accordance with the strength and acuity of the understanding of their faith) clear *vestigia* in this intoxicated world – vestiges of the paradisiacal gifts (even in the midst of anti-Christian cultural infatuation)”¹⁸⁴

Already in the 1932 edition, Schilder had made the following remark: “Not only matters concerning the church and the forgiveness of sins are matters of faith, but of all things it must be said that they are known only through faith, not by experience. Even questions about what culture consists of and how it manifests itself are answered by faith alone.”¹⁸⁵

Although these notions of commonness are practical, surrounded by caveats, and provide only a very limited notion of commonness, they do indicate that Schilder did not envisage a separate Christian culture. As such, they confirm what I explained in section 3.4.1 about Schilder’s understanding of culture as ‘daily life’. In the next chapter, this will find confirmation in his position in the debates over Christian organizations (see section 5.3.2).¹⁸⁶

A concrete confirmation of this interpretation is also found during the war. In 1941 the Dutch churches cooperated to publish a brochure along the lines of the Barmen Declaration in Germany. The *Hervormde* Barthians, including Miskotte with whom Schilder had debated fiercely only a decade ago, had initiated the text and sought Schilder’s cooperation. He suggested a number of alterations so that the synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* could co-publish the brochure. The group met in Kampen in 1941, and many of Schilder’s suggestions to ‘debarthianize’ the text were accepted. At the synod, he advocated in favor of this united statement from the two churches. The synod, however, opted for a separate statement.¹⁸⁷ This example clearly confirms that Schilder’s

¹⁸²Schilder, *Christ and Culture*, p. 112. “...door wie God dient en wie hem *niet* dient. Die twee zijn geografisch niet gescheiden in de wereld.” (Schilder, *Christus en cultuur*, p. 78).

¹⁸³Canons of Dort III/IV, 4 (Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, p. 588).

¹⁸⁴Schilder, *Christ and Culture*, p. 115. “...toch altijd (naar de sterkte en de scherpte van zijn geloofsinzicht) duidelijke ‘vestigia’ zullen blijven in de dronken wereld, vestigia van paradijsgeven (ook in de antichristelijke cultuurverdwazing) ...” (Schilder, *Christus en cultuur*, p. 81). See also Schilder, *Dictaat Americana*, pp. 2-4.

¹⁸⁵Schilder, *Christ and Culture*, p. 128. “Niet slechts zaken van „kerk” en „vergeving der zonden” zijn geloofszaken; van alle dingen geldt, dat zij slechts kunnen gekend worden door het geloof. Ook de vraag naar wezen en verschijning van de cultuur wordt slechts door het geloof beantwoord.” (Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, p. 270), unchanged in Schilder, *Christus en cultuur*, p. 89.

¹⁸⁶See also P. van Gorp. *K. Schilder: Christus en cultuur*. Goes: Woord en Wereld, 1991, pp. 67-72, who offers a similar evaluation of Douma’s interpretation.

¹⁸⁷G. Harinck. “Mijn volk dienen, zonder in conflict te komen met rechtmatige

fiery polemics with the Barthians, which did not stop during the war, still did not prevent him from cooperating with them when necessary. He even advocated an interdenominational statement. Schilder should therefore not be read to call for an isolated Christian culture around the one true church.

The Value of History All this leaves open the question of how history, including culture, is to be valued. For Schilder keeps repeating that he does not want to abandon the Kuyperian program: "The reader must have understood by now that, in the problem of the affirmation or rejection of the created world and our cultural vocation, dr. Kuyper finds us behind his banner in the battle against that unhealthy pietism."¹⁸⁸ Even in 1940 Schilder affirms that common grace is "still of utmost significance insofar as it awakens and mobilizes what otherwise would have been an isolated people."¹⁸⁹ But if culture is not an act of God's common grace and if the treasures of this earth will not be carried into the new earth, what deeper motivation do we have not to turn our backs to this world? Schilder's answer is that we should not seek the value of history in the eschaton. The value lies in its value for God. The mere fact that history has a place in God's counsel gives it value. God gave humanity the mandate to develop creation. The value of culture lies in obedience to that mandate: "The actual value does not lie in the present works of culture, fixed to a certain date, even if it were the last date on the calendar, but in its living tension, in its tendency."¹⁹⁰ As we saw above, the new earth will have passed through a moment of shock, and as a result all will have changed so much that it is impossible to understand the treasures of culture as being 'carried in'. But history will never be lost or forgotten. History may look pointless and horrible, drenched in the blood of its wars, blurred by an endless stream of tears. In the eyes of God, however, history is imperishable. In all of this, God is faithful to the work of his hands, he is present in that history. The face of the new earth is depicted by Schilder as the marriage supper of the lamb, looking as if it had been slain, as a clear indication that the memory of the cross will be vividly present in heaven – and with the cross, Schilder says, all of history. For without history, the cross does not make sense. The marriage

verordeningen'. Klaas Schilder en het verzet". In: *Tussen lijdelijkheid en verzet. Gereformeerden in bezettingstijd*. Barneveld, 2005, pp. 39–56, pp. 47–51.

¹⁸⁸"De lezer heeft reeds begrepen, dat in het vraagstuk van het al-of-niet-'ja'-zeggen tot de (geschapen) wereld en onze roeping-tot-cultuur, dr Kuyper ons achter zijn vaandel kreeg in den strijd tegen elk ziek 'vroomheids'-ideaal" (Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, p. 294).

¹⁸⁹"...toch nog steeds op één punt is van grote betekenis en van de hoogste betekenis, namelijk op het punt van wakkermaking en mobiliseren van wat anders een afgescheiden volkje wezen zou." (Schilder, *VW40-41*, pp. 202–203).

¹⁹⁰"Want de eigenlijke 'waarde' ligt niet in de 'fix und fertig' op zekeren datum, al was 't ook op den laatsten kalenderdatum, presente werk-stukken der cultuur, doch in haar levende spanning, in haar tendenz," (Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, pp. 304–305).

supper of the lamb is not an esoteric meal, but one that oversees and remembers history.¹⁹¹

This affirmation of the value of history fits with Schilder's doctrine of God as I described it above, in particular his notion of God's eternity. Schilder asks, "Is the world merely an end to arrive at a remote goal? Or is the world in itself a goal desired by God? Does he love the world only as a means to arrive at something else, heaven and hell? Or does God find beauty in the world as such?"¹⁹² Schilder neither denies nor affirms this question. Behind it he identifies the classical Reformed debate over infralapsarianism and supralapsarianism. Infralapsarians would, according to Schilder, reply that history has intrinsic value in the eyes of God. Supralapsarians, on the contrary, would counter that for God only the ultimate end of heaven and hell matters. Schilder is, however, unhappy with both these positions and explicitly endorses Bavinck's *Reformed Dogmatics* on this point.¹⁹³ If God's eternity is best defined as a simultaneous and perfect possession of interminable life, as Schilder believes, then speaking of succession in God's council, even if only a logical order, does not make sense. We cannot speak of logical or temporary succession of counsel in God if he possesses all completely at once. Schilder ties God's decision and the execution of that decision as closely together as possible. He takes God's immutability to imply "that God takes his eternal decisions all the time, at every instance, that his decisions are not dead, mute and silent, motionless petrifications, like the design of an architect."¹⁹⁴ Succession in God contradicts the confession of God's simplicity and immutability, says Schilder in his lectures: "Fool, do you not know the value of remembrance? All things will be remembered; and there is nothing, not even the whisper in a private room, that will not be announced through the loudspeaker of heaven and hell. Tota simul, totum simul, that includes all of history, the entire past, all that has glidden by in the dimension of yesterday, it will all be laid bare".¹⁹⁵ And, finally: "Means is end, and end is means; there is but one End, which is also Beginning: that is He."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, pp. 203-216.

¹⁹²Schilder, *HC III*, p. 455. I am aware that the work in which this passage occurs falls outside of the period described here. However, what Schilder writes is clearly in line with thoughts in *Wat is de hemel?*¹ and with his definition of eternity as we also find it in his classroom notes from the 1940-1941 curriculum (Schilder, *Kompendium dogmatiek VI*, pp. 229-230).

¹⁹³Schilder, *HC III*, p. 469. Schilder cites H. Bavinck. *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*. 4th ed. Vol. 2. 4 vols. Kampen: Kok, 1928, pp. 345-347 (*ET* H. Bavinck. *Reformed Dogmatics Volume 2: God and Creation*. Ed. by J. Bolt. Trans. by J. Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004, pp. 382-388).

¹⁹⁴"dat God elk oogenblik zijn eeuwige besluit nòg besluit, dat Hij aldoor besluit, dat zijn besluiten geen doode, stomme, stille, onbeweeglijke petrefacten zijn, zooals het bestek van een architect" (Schilder, *HC III*, p. 134). See also Schilder, *HC IV*, p. 195.

¹⁹⁵Schilder, *HC III*, p. 479.

¹⁹⁶"Middel is doel, en doel is middel; er is maar één Doel, dat ook Begin is: dat is Hij."

God's Contemporaneity The relationship between God and the world is seen by Schilder in a kind of contemporaneity. That is also why he writes of creation as a continuous process. Creation is never something that can exist by itself. Only God can exist by himself and is truly autonomous, while creation depends upon him. God is continuously preserving his creation. This is what Schilder seeks to capture in the notion of the *pactum salutis*, the covenant of redemption, which has already been discussed above (section 4.2.3).¹⁹⁷ This the eternal covenant of God with himself, in the Trinity. Time and history exist within this eternal covenant. This is how his creation is an 'ongoing' process. Creation and providence are, therefore, overlapping categories. They may be distinguished, but are inseparable.¹⁹⁸ So too he writes: "If the permanent preservation of the world by God, the eternal one who acts in time, would cease only for one moment, the world would lose its foundation and fall apart."¹⁹⁹ Because God is simple, his act of creation is at once a decision of his will and its execution. God cannot will something and not do it at the same time. That is what the creation and preservation of the world is, a permanent wilful decision by God. Creation has no inherent capacity to exist or to continue. That too is why notions of commonness, especially common grace, make no sense to Schilder. It becomes an outright offence to God's self-preservation in his creation for there to be such a thing as common grace. If creation proceeds (not as in emanation, but as a free act of God) from God and is directed to Him who is outside of time, then creation can indeed only be a substratum of grace and judgment. For only as such can it return to God and be good before him. Sin too can in that sense not prevent this self-preservation of God through his creation. It can only, in Christ, return restored to God's order. Therefore, those who are outside of Christ exist for God only in hell, only there has sin found its proper place before God, "so that God's righteous judgment might fulfil the written and spoken law, and so contain everything and everyone in the great coherence of created things, which God always sees and oversees to his glory."²⁰⁰ Schilder can then also playfully write that the treasures of the kings are already being brought into the new Jerusalem today, alluding to Kuyper's exegesis of Rev. 21:24.

It is within this framework of creation as God's self-preservation, which is the right and only possible order of things, that we have to understand Schil-

(Schilder, *HC III*, p. 480).

¹⁹⁷Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, pp. 263-265 and Schilder, *VWPreken II*, pp. 343-345.

¹⁹⁸Schilder, *HC III*, p. 220.

¹⁹⁹"Indien de permanente terése van God, de eeuwige en de in den tijd optredende, ook maar één oogenblik ware onderlaten, de wereld zou haar draaggrond missen en uiteengevallen zijn." (Schilder, *HC III*, p. 222).

²⁰⁰"Opdat Gods billijk oordeel 't geschreven en gesproken recht volvoere, en alles en allen besloten houde in den grooten samenhang der geschapen dingen, die God altijd aanziet en overziet tot zijn verheerlijking." (Schilder, *HC III*, p. 257).

der's dynamic understanding of the church and his emphasis on the cultural mandate and the image of God as the fulfillment of an office. It is the vocation of every person to find his or her place in this order. That is why Schilder keeps hammering on the anvil of obedience and ties cultural life so powerfully to Christ. At this point he takes up the main idea of the distinction he had made between assembly and congregation. God's 'congregation' is the cosmic order of things, God's will, God's self-preservation which dominates and guides everything. The human 'assembly' is called to be part of that gathering. Only in gathering in the stream of God's congregation can true harmony with that order of creation be found. That true harmony is to be found in Christ, and Christ gathers his church. This is how the church becomes the focal point of Schilder's desire for building his theology from the sovereignty of God. It is also in God's will that the church's deep connection with the entire cosmos is found, not in any notion of commonness. Moreover, Schilder's emphasis on the legal church and the legal covenant we have explored above fits in with his notion of God's self-preservation as the only possible order of things. The forensic element in Schilder's thought is connected to his doctrine of God. What matters is God's ordinances, to submit to his order of creation, which is now only available in Christ.

In sum, we see Schilder continuing his critique of Barth along the same lines as in the previous period, his concern being that with Barth the *realis praesentia salutis* is endangered. Schilder's thought undergoes a development in terms of the growing critique on his own tradition. Out of his concern for a theocentric theology, which is very similar to Barth and has been characteristic of Schilder ever since the early years of his pastorate, Schilder critiques Kuyper's and Bavinck's concept of common grace along with its eschatological implications. Such are, according to him, the consequences of a truly theocentric theology. Schilder draws the picture of a timeless and immutable God as the starting point of theology, not as an 'Unmoved Mover', but as a God who remains true to himself. History then has value, not because of what is saved into the eschaton, but for the value it has in God's eyes in the present. We could even say that for Schilder earthly time is relativized, since God is above time. As such, the fact that things perish or that all will eventually be transformed through a moment of shock becomes irrelevant to the question of its value. Its value lies in its current tendency, in the mere fact that it is part of the history God intended. And that history will not be lost, given that it will be remembered in eternity by both God and people. Therefore, culture and cultural activity is not only important for its results, but just as much for the act of obedience to the eternal God, in the proper place it takes in creation as God's self-preservation. This furthermore sheds light on the dynamism we have seen in Schilder's view on the church and

on the covenant: It is the present, the actual tendency, that counts, and not the static phenomena.

Predestination or *Præsentia*? Before I close this section, it is important to deal with the critique that has been voiced over Schilder's views as I developed them in this section. Schilder's doctrine of double predestination in particular has been the subject of much fierce criticism. Jochem Douma, a neo-Calvinist working in Schilder's line, was critical of him on this issue, arguing that double predestination is a dominant element in his theology, which he has absolutized to a greater degree than Calvin or even Beza had ever done.²⁰¹ Veldhuizen similarly identifies Schilder's radical double predestination as the dominant trait in his thought, so that history is in the end swallowed up into the eternity of God.²⁰² Van Bekkum nuances Veldhuizen's judgment, but agrees that predestination is the dominant element in Schilder's thought, together with creation.²⁰³ Berkouwer, however, following Strauss, has warned that predestination should not be posited as the overarching theme of Schilder's thought.²⁰⁴ Yet he does note a central tension between the covenant and human responsibility over against double predestination in Schilder's thought, acknowledging that the latter is indeed a dominant theme. It is difficult to deny that Schilder adheres to a rigid doctrine of double predestination, and also that he frequently evokes it as an essential part of his theology. He can even make such claims as that "God creates the subjects of his own wrath" and that "God is not ashamed to be called the great Hater."²⁰⁵ I believe, however, that the claim that double predestination dominates Schilder's theology is not justified, and am inclined to follow Strauss's warning. Schilder's central concern is not predestination, but the sovereignty of God. That is what dominates his theology: that God is infinitely sovereign over his creation.²⁰⁶ That is, God the radical other: being, not becoming, not *aeviternas*, but *aeternas*, immutable and simple. This way of describing God is no particularity, but mainstream orthodox Christianity. It puts Schilder in the company of Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Kuyper, and Bavinck. Double predestination is, as Bavinck also acknowledges, unavoidable if one wants to hold to eternal condemnation on the one hand and God's immutability and

²⁰¹Douma, *Algemene genade*, pp. 295-302 (ET Douma, *Common Grace*, pp. 326-333).

²⁰²Veldhuizen, *God en mens onderweg*, pp. 151-177, 302-303.

²⁰³Bekkum, "Klaas Schilder", p. 153.

²⁰⁴Strauss, *Alles of niks*, p. 200 and Berkouwer, *Zoeken en vinden*, p. 256.

²⁰⁵Schilder, *HC I*, pp. 488-489.

²⁰⁶See also H. M. Yoo. *Raad en daad: infra- en supralapsarisme in de Nederlandse gereformeerde theologie van de 19e en 20e eeuw*. Kampen: Mondiss, 1990, pp. 166-167, who criticizes Douma along similar lines. Kuitert also sees the sovereignty of God behind Schilder's construction of double predestination, and praises Schilder for it (Kuitert, *De mensvormigheid Gods*, p. 20).

atemporality on the other.²⁰⁷ For Schilder, double predestination only plays an important role in the context of the doctrine of God. When discussing other theological loci, like the covenant and the church, predestination is explicitly referred to the background. There the promises and threats of the covenant within the church are all that matter for us now. Those who believe that eternity consumes history, or that predestination wins over responsibility, fail to note the centrality of Boethius's definition of eternity in Schilder's thought. Veldhuizen repeats that for Schilder God decides *before* things happen. With Boethius's definition, however, there is no *before*. As I explained above, God's decision and act coincide. Thus, God's election or reprobation happen simultaneously with the entire history of the world. God possesses *tota simul*. Schilder needed Boethius to affirm both the value of history, through the loudspeaker of heaven and hell, and the sovereignty and otherness of God. How can the church, the covenant, and human responsibility be so central for Schilder if history does not matter? Schilder's theology is a theology of history, a theology of the present, of the *praesentia salutis*. He tried to stretch that as far as he could without abandoning the premises of orthodoxy's affirmation of God's sovereignty, his immutability, and his eternity. This is, again, Schilder in the ultimate balancing act between his neo-Calvinist roots and the Barthian cry for the otherness of God.

This way of interpreting Schilder also sheds light on his views on culture. When Douma (and Van Ruler) writes that he abandons the unity of culture and diverges from Kuyper on that point, that results from the same reading from the perspective of predestination.²⁰⁸ Schilder's theology is not dominated by predestination, but by the sovereignty of God. He does not need common grace to affirm the intrinsic value of the world. For Schilder, culture is one. It is a mixed reality where *sunousia* and *koinonia* are intertwined. Even the church is for Schilder an Augustinian *corpus permixtum*. He is no holiness Christian, either when it comes to the church or to culture. What matters is one's posture, the will to submit to God's will. Indeed, seen from God's eternal counsel, culture is two (i.e., heaven and hell), since God sees past, present, and future simultaneously. As I argued in section 4.2.3, election is not a category of importance for Schilder's doctrines of the church and the covenant. The same holds true for his view on culture, I would argue. Schilder adheres to double predestination because he takes seriously the otherness, the sovereignty of God, his immutability and his timelessness. It is there that the discussion with Schilder should take place, not in predestination.

²⁰⁷Bavinck, *Dogmatiek* 2, pp. 344-358 (*ET* Bavinck, *Dogmatics* 2, pp. 382-395). See similarly Mouw, *He Shines in All That's Fair*.

²⁰⁸Douma, "Christus en cultuur", pp. 190-192.

Instead of positing predestination as the problem of Schilder's theology, I wonder whether the problem is not rather located in Schilder's desire to reason consistently in this manner. This is suggested by Okke Jager in his insightful article on the structure of Schilder's theology. He argues rightly that Schilder's desire to think as concretely as possible led him into a kind of scholasticism that he himself despised. To this one might add that Schilder's vehement rejection of Barth's notion of the paradox in revelation and his subsequent embrace of the perspicuity of Scripture have led him to forget that the light of God's revelation is and remains surrounded by smoke,²⁰⁹ that the unity of the two ropes of God's revelation is beyond the ceiling, out of sight.²¹⁰ Over against Barth, Schilder became so eager to avoid the *sacrificium intellectus* that he risked crossing Calvin's 'metae', the limits of human knowledge, which he himself acknowledges.²¹¹ Schilder certainly believed that he was not reaching beyond the curtain, but merely using sanctified reason to connect the dots laid out in Scripture, putting them before his readers as concretely as possible, so that the offence of the gospel might be felt for what it is and its readers can do nothing but believe or reject.²¹²

4.3.3 Church and Creation

Having discussed some key elements in Schilder's broader theological development that inform his view on the church's engagement, I can now turn to developments on the matter itself, starting with the way he, entirely in line with what I described in the previous section, forges a stronger bond between the church and creation.

In this period, Schilder's emphasis on the breadth of the church is given a more substantial foundation. To drive home his point about the church's public nature, Schilder wants to forge a strong bond between the church and the creation of the world. In his classes on Barth's *Credo* in 1935, Schilder makes the daunting and novel statement that the church dates from before the fall. In his understanding the church is primarily the congregation of the faithful. This congregation in Word and Spirit already existed prior to the fall. Although the gospel and the sacraments come after the fall, the church does not:

²⁰⁹Schilder, *Licht in den rook*¹, pp. 255-269.

²¹⁰Schilder, *Bij dichters en schrijftgeleerden*, p. 140.

²¹¹Schilder, *Zur Begriffsgeschichte des Paradoxon*, p. 448.

²¹²This echoes Kuitert's critique on the way reason operates in Schilder's thought. Kuitert suggests that for Schilder the sanctified Christian can use reason to overcome the limited anthropomorphic character of Scripture and return to the real knowledge of the transcendent God. Kuitert concludes in somewhat overly dramatic fashion that Schilder ends up putting revelation in the air (Kuitert, *De mensvormigheid Gods*, p. 118).

“The church was not founded and is [rather] a matter of nature.”²¹³ Like the covenant, the church has different phases but is ultimately one, rooted in the will of God before creation. Since the church did not start at a certain point in history, it is “the world’s most antique and hence most modern element”.²¹⁴ On many other occasions, Schilder makes a similar connection. There, however, he is reluctant to speak of the church when it comes to the pre-fall community. Strictly speaking we cannot call what happened before the fall ‘church’, since it is not yet ‘kuriake’, that is, “of the Lord”. Here Schilder refers to the supposed Greek origins of the word church, *κυριακή*, which is derived from *κύριος*.²¹⁵ Apart from his 1935 lectures, he seems to be reluctant to speak of a church before the fall.²¹⁶ However, in all these instances he clearly wants to make the same point: “God’s kingdom, God’s family, God’s community, God’s society, and God’s state existed even in paradise. Even though this could not yet be called a ‘church’, it was church in principle.”²¹⁷ And in his 1942 lectures he remarked: “To have a proper understanding of what is meant by ‘church’, one has to go back before the fall, when the church was still gathered as the body of God.”²¹⁸ After the fall, the church would become the body of Christ.

While the notion of the church’s antiquity was a commonplace in Reformed theology, the identification of its origins prior to the fall is a novelty. The Belgic Confession states that the church has been there “from the beginning of the world” and the Heidelberg Catechism teaches that the church is gathered “from the beginning to the end of the world”.²¹⁹ This was commonly interpreted in the sense that the church came into existence after the fall. Along those lines, Bavinck speaks of the origins of the church just after the fall. Prior to the fall, Adam and Eve were not a part of the church, nor were the angels, since they had no need for a savior.²²⁰ Honig, who had been Schilder’s professor of dogmatics,

²¹³“Maar de kerk is feitelijk niet gesticht, en is een heel natuurlijk [...] gebeuren.” (Schilder, *Dictaat credo*, pp. 30-31).

²¹⁴Schilder, *Dictaat credo*, p. 31.

²¹⁵See two sermons on Lord’s Day 21 in the Heidelberg Catechism from 1935 and 1942 (K. Schilder. *Preken*. Ed. by W. G. de Vries. Vol. 3. Verzamelde werken I. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1955, pp. 208, 227) and another sermon on Gen. 3 from 1937 (Schilder, *VWPreken II*, p. 168).

²¹⁶Nevertheless, in Schilder, *Dictaat Americana*, p. 4, he says that the church cannot be seen from a mere soteriological perspective.

²¹⁷“Maar toch ook in het paradijs was een rijk Gods, een gemeenschap Gods, een gezin van God, een maatschappij van God, een staat van God. Het mocht nog wel geen kerk heten, maar het was dat toch in beginsel.” (Schilder, *VWPreken III*, p. 209).

²¹⁸“Zo ook kan men de zaak, die met de naam kerk wordt uitgedrukt, alleen goed verstaan, wanneer men teruggaat tot voor de val, toen de kerk verzameld werd als *σῶμα του θεού*.” (Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 91).

²¹⁹Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, pp. 324, 417.

²²⁰Bavinck, *Dogmatiek 2*, p. 285 (*ET Bavinck, Dogmatics 4*, p. 300).

follows Bavinck on this point.²²¹ It comes as no surprise that Schilder is hesitant to depart from this interpretation. However, he clearly wants to be sure that the essence of the church cannot be separated from what is human: “Also the church can say, ‘I am human, nothing human can be alien to me’”.²²²

Schilder’s somewhat idiosyncratic view on the church’s roots before the fall fit well in his wider thought. As we saw above (section 4.2.3), he draws a close connection between the church and the covenant. As to the covenant, Schilder stresses its the unity. The covenant of works and the covenant of grace are to be understood as phases of the one covenant. It is one covenant that dates back before the fall. Likewise, as we saw in the previous chapter, Schilder’s emphasis on the cultural mandate also dates back before the fall. With the church at the heart of the cultural mandate, it makes complete sense to date the church back before the fall. “Return to the ABC”,²²³ is a central motif of Schilder’s theology, which he now also applies to the church. Or, as he emphatically states in his 1942 lectures: “All dogmatic issues related to the savior and thus with soteriology must be drawn back to before the fall.”²²⁴ Rather than a new development in his thought, it is once again more like a logical consequence of earlier emphases that we see here. So too one might recall Schilder’s 1932 article “Coetus et congregatio” and the reiteration of that line of argument in his Catechism commentary: the church is a matter of world history (section 3.2).

In the previous chapter, I expressed a desire for more concrete applications of Schilder’s view on the church. These have been and remain sparse. Yet on this particular issue, Schilder does provide a concrete application of his emphasis. In his lecture on the nature of the relationship between local churches within a denomination from March 1941, Schilder further illustrates what the creation emphasis implies: “Insofar as humanity is created with a variety of race, blood, and gender, this same variety must necessarily be found within the church.”²²⁵ Just over two weeks after the first raid against the Jews was organized in Amsterdam, this was a profound statement to make. Earlier Schilder had been even more explicit: “The church does not have an institution of strangers, where foreigners are odd. When someone comes from abroad to live in our place, then

²²¹Honig, *Dogmatiek*, pp. 709-710. See also T. L. Haitjema. *Dogmatiek als apologie*. Haarlem: Bohn, 1948, p. 282, who interprets the confession as dating the church back to the post-fall situation. He notes that “even Kuyper” did not dare to date the church back further back in time. Haitjema himself prefers to start at Pentecost and draw lines to Gen. 3, not to Gen. 1.

²²²“Ook de kerk kan zeggen: homo sum, humani nil a me alienum puto.” Schilder quotes the Roman playwright Terence (Schilder, *Dictaat credo*, p. 31).

²²³Schilder, “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”, pp. 249, 253.

²²⁴“Alle kwesties van de dogmatiek, die verband houden met de Sootèr en dus met de soteriologie, moet men terugleiden tot voor de val.” (Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 91).

²²⁵Schilder, *VW40-41*, p. 448.

he can become a full member of the church. Is he of different color? It does not matter. Does he have a different nose? The same applies.”²²⁶ The reference to a different nose is an allusion to the perception of Jews as having a relatively bigger nose.²²⁷ A year later, in July 1942, Schilder was asked to preach in his former congregation in Rotterdam-Delfshaven because two of its pastors had recently been arrested by the Germans, allegedly for their sermons.²²⁸ Schilder came, and refused to tone down his message in any way. In the afternoon he preached on Lord’s Day 21 of the Heidelberg Catechism on the church: “There can be no church as a community of a particular race. I admit no church of blacks over against a church of Boers in Africa. I admit no church of Jews over against a church of Arabs. The church is not a community of race, but a community of saints.”²²⁹ In 1917 Schilder painted a countercultural picture of a worldwide church, where the western churches would “need their black brothers”. In 1941 he draws a similarly countercultural picture of a church that includes those who are persecuted by the Nazis. The church is God’s renewed humanity, so it had better reflect the variety God placed in his creation. The church is catholic.

This is how Schilder can positively affirm the pluriformity of the church. The church should indeed reflect the variety of creation, including all its races and peoples. In his eschatological vision of the “Great Supper”, Schilder explicitly speaks of the pluriformity of the church in this positive sense. All the individual memories and everybody’s particularities comes to full expression at the Table of the Lamb. There one will find unity in the variety.²³⁰ For this reason, Schilder follows Greijdanus in speaking of pluriformity within the true church.²³¹ Schilder’s critique on pluriformity, as I discussed above (section 4.2.1), is not aimed at the pluriformity of the church itself, but at the way it is expressed in different church institutions. The quietistic effect of the Kuyprian notion of pluriformity was the subject of Schilder’s critique, and there was no pursuit of uniformity. In the next chapter, this element will return in Schilder’s criticism on the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*, in which he indeed came to recognize such a misguided pursuit of uniformity (section 5.2.3).

²²⁶Schilder, *VW40-41*, p. 446.

²²⁷See O.B., “Het Duitsche Nationaal Socialisme. V.” in: *De Reformatie* (December 13, 1935), p. 86.

²²⁸J. Ridderbos. *Strijd op twee fronten : Schilder en de gereformeerde ‘elite’ in de jaren 1933-1945 tussen aanpassing, collaboratie en verzet op kerkelijk en politiek terrein*. Kampen: Kok, 1994, II, pp. 272-275.

²²⁹“Er kan ook geen kerk zijn als gemeenschap van rassen. Ik ken geen kaffer-kerk tegenover een boeren-kerk in Afrika, ik ken geen Joden-kerk tegenover een Arabieren-kerk. Niet rassen-gemeenschap, maar heiligen-gemeenschap is de kerk.” (Schilder, *VWPreken III*, p. 227).

²³⁰Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, pp. 222-227.

²³¹Schilder, *VWKerk II*, pp. 399, 407.

4.3.4 Institution, Organism, and Kingdom

In the previous chapter, I underlined the way Schilder narrowed the church down to the institution, together with the sacraments and the preaching of the Word. I also demonstrated the resulting tension with his understanding of the church as the new humanity. Given what we have seen thus far in the present section on the church as dating back to creation and as the only place where communion with the cosmos is possible, this tension only increases. Kuyper had solved this tension by introducing the distinction of the church as institution and the church as organism.²³² I already showed how Schilder came to be increasingly dissatisfied with the Kuyperian distinctions. The same is true for the present distinction. What is Schilder's criticism, and what does he substitute for it?

Institution, not Organism Already in the previous period, Schilder's emphasis was on the church as a visible institution. Kuyper's invention of the organic church already did not prove very helpful in that emphasis. In his lectures on Barth's *Credo* in 1935, Schilder cannot resist addressing also his position in the ecclesial polemics on the church, even though the actual purpose of the lectures was to counter the views of Barth.²³³ Schilder's concern with Kuyper's distinction is that the organic is the essential part of the church, while the institution is accidental. Kuyper locates the church's institution as late as Pentecost, lasting until the youngest day. This is wrong, Schilder claims, because what constitutes the church is the institution. Of course, there is an organic component to the church, but that applies to everything. Marriage also has an organic component. Without the institution, however, it is no longer matrimony, but free love. Moreover, it does not make sense to call 'church' what is not the institution. Take, for example, a student society. When one of its members visits the theatre, it does not make sense to say that he is in the theatre as a member of the student society. The student society only exists if it organizes a formal meeting according to its regulations, as an institution.²³⁴

Why does this matter? Schilder's concern is twofold. The first is an attempt to purge theology of 'scholasticism' with its unhelpful and blurring distinctions, as I also described above.²³⁵ Rather, Schilder sought "simply to consider the church according to the normal, God-created laws of assemblies in this world". The words 'simply' and 'normal' are notable here for the opposition they imply to scholastic distinctions. A second concern was the "disastrous idea of pluri-

²³²Kuyper, *Geworteld en gegrond* (ET Kuyper, *The Church*, pp. 44-73).

²³³Schilder, *Dictaat credo*.

²³⁴Schilder, *Dictaat credo*, pp. 24-25.

²³⁵Schilder, *Dictaat credo*, p. 23.

formity and the passive attitude of the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*.”²³⁶ Again, we see Schilder’s deepest concern in relation to the church surfacing, namely passivity. If the essence of the church is the organism, then the institution is relativized. But the institution was, according to Schilder, the very essence of the church. What he wanted was a strong church in a turbulent world. A church that loses its connection to Christ can no longer be part of the congregation of God. Such is only possible with a concrete institution, gathered by Christ under his Word, not with an abstract church organism. With the church as organism, also the essential legal connotations of the institution are lost. And, for Schilder, to be the lawful church is essential for its faithfulness. The ‘scholasticism’, in his view, only served as a means to duck out from under God’s clear and concrete commands. Or, as Schilder puts it in his 1942 lectures: “The name ‘church’ should be used exclusively for the assembly of believers, called to a specific service, i.e., to give birth through the Word and to strengthen the believers through Word and Sacrament. The church is after all the mother of us all.”²³⁷

In these lectures, Schilder subjects the idea of the church as organism to an even more extensive critique. At this point he no longer wants to use the term ‘organism’ at all. It is a modern term, he claims, which Kuyper first used in Reformed ecclesiology. Its roots go back to Schleiermacher’s romanticism and have pantheistic connotations.²³⁸ It suggests, Schilder furthermore argues, that the church bears within itself all that is necessary to be the church in an almost deistic manner. That implicitly denies the active and ongoing ‘charismatic’ operation of God, who in Christ actively congregates his church.²³⁹ In 1949 Schilder expands this critique on an organic understanding of the church as the ‘body of Christ’. This expression from the New Testament is not to be understood organically, says Schilder, but institutionally.²⁴⁰ The connotations of the church as organism, in other words, contradict Schilder’s dynamic understanding of the church. An organism acts and moves autonomously, while the dynamic church receives its dynamic from following the living Christ. In light of Schilder’s view of creation as continuously upheld by God’s self-preservation, his critique on organic motifs is understandable. The mere suggestion of an autonomous existence is to be eschewed. Thus, Schilder suggests, rather than organism and institution, we should use the distinction between ‘assembly’ and ‘congregation’:

²³⁶Schilder, *Dictaat credo*, p. 24.

²³⁷“De kerknaam willen we reserveren voor dat, wat de vergadering der gelovigen is, welke vergadering tot een bepaald dienst geroepen is, n.l. te baren door het Woord, en de gelovige te versterken door Woord en sacrament. De kerk is immers ons aller moeder.” (Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 89).

²³⁸See also Mondriaan’s aversion to the natural in art, leading him to his abstract geometrical style (Mondriaan, “De nieuwe beelding in de schilderkunst I - XI”, p. 4).

²³⁹Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, pp. 107-108, 113-116.

²⁴⁰Schilder, *VWKerk III*, pp. 287-297, 307-315.

"The herd only becomes a herd with the shepherd. Without the shepherd there is not even an organism, but only a noisy bunch of wandering sheep."²⁴¹ Any definition of the church disconnected from the active work of congregation by its head, Christ, puts the church at risk of becoming an 'assembly' without a congregation, a gathering as there are many others in this world.

Church and Kingdom Rather than the church as organism, which for Kuyper, in Schilder's reading of him, had priority over the church as institution, Schilder wants to begin with the church as institution, which then radiates out into the world as the hub of the kingdom, where he denies that he is replacing Kuyper's church as organism with the kingdom: "He [Kuyper] sees the church as organism as preceding the work of institution. Our view is exactly the other way around: First comes the church with its ministry of Word and Sacrament, and with it grows the power of God's kingdom."²⁴² The accuracy of Schilder's assessment of Kuyper is questionable, or one might ask which Kuyper it is that he assesses. As Schilder himself also notes, Kuyper at times stresses the organism of the church as the essential church, and at other times sees a great role for the church as institution.²⁴³ In many ways, however, the way Schilder treats the kingdom of God does indeed replace Kuyper's idea of the church as organism. In this period he continues the way we described how Schilder's broad church works out in practice. What is new is that he now addresses the issue at some length. Kingdom and church are "inseparably connected".²⁴⁴ And where Kuyper might be ambiguous on the priority of the institutional church, for Schilder that is a most clear matter: "It is outright hilarious for the angels (forgive me the metaphor) when they hear some toddlers claiming that we can forget about the church while being on fire for the kingdom!"²⁴⁵ The church, for

²⁴¹"De kudde qua kudde is er pas, als de herder er bij is. Zonder de herder is het zelfs geen organisme, maar alleen een roezemoezige troep van loslopende schapen" (Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 111).

²⁴²"en de kerk als organisme ziet hij als voorafgaand aan de institueerings-werkzaamheid. Wij echter zien het juist omgekeerd: eerst is gegeven de kerk met haar dienst van Woord en sacrament en daarmee groeit de macht van het koninkrijk Gods." (Schilder, *Dictaat credo*, p. 45).

²⁴³Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 88. See also Bruijne, "Colony of Heaven", pp. 459-466, who makes a strong case for the church as institution as equally important to Kuyper as the church as organism, contrary to what is often argued. In doing so, De Bruijne endorses the way Schilder understood himself to be connecting open ends in Kuyper's thought, at least insofar as it comes to ecclesiology. According to De Bruijne, Kuyper himself understood his thought as open-ended and deeply contextual. In that sense Schilder was right to say that he was true to Kuyper's line, although many of his contemporaries disagreed.

²⁴⁴Schilder, *Dictaat credo*, pp. 37-38.

²⁴⁵"Voor de engelen is het om te schaterlachen (vergeef de beeldspraak) wanneer vandaag een paar dreumesen beweren, dat we de kerk links kunnen laten liggen, maar voor Gods koninkrijk in vlam moeten staan!" (Schilder, *Dictaat credo*, p. 38).

Schilder, is always in its narrow sense, in line with *Ons Aller Moeder*, seen as the institution that gives birth and nourishes through Word and Sacrament.²⁴⁶ The kingdom is then the secondary but essential step towards “all of life’s terrains”.²⁴⁷

Broad or Narrow Church? This brings us back to the tension we also noted in the previous chapter. If the church is understood by Schilder in its narrow sense, as ‘our mother’ who administers the words and the sacraments, what are we to make of his church in the broad sense, as the new humanity? This tension is only increased, as I noted, by the strong connection Schilder draws between church and creation. He also speaks of the church that will exist in the eschaton as well.²⁴⁸ Surely, this may not be taken to imply that the word and sacraments are administered. And indeed, Schilder explicitly denies this, both for the original state (see above) and for the eschaton.²⁴⁹

The tension may, however, be somewhat alleviated by the notion of the church as a community, which also returns in this period. In a passage from a lecture given during the war, Schilder even distances himself somewhat from his own ‘narrow’ definition of the church, which has suddenly become ‘Barthian’:

“I cannot see the church in the Barthian manner, as a space in which the ‘Word’ is preached, a place for the witness of the Word, a place where the ‘Word’ takes the form of Jesus Christ and the sermon. Instead, I must see the church as a community, hewn out of human material. As a community of those who, while keeping their full humanity, are once again made servants of God’s glorification by the grace of Christ Jesus, who paid their debt. And also by the power of the Holy Spirit, who takes everything from Christ, incorporates people into the second Adam, sanctifies them, and glorifies them. All this happens very concretely, down here.”²⁵⁰

As in “Coetus et congregatio”, the focus is on community on the firm basis of Christ in his Word. The title of a brief article in *De Reformatie* in 1937 says it all:

²⁴⁶The qualification of the church as “our mother” occurs only after 1935.

²⁴⁷Schilder, *Dictaat credo*, p. 37.

²⁴⁸Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, pp. 91-92.

²⁴⁹Schilder, *Wat is de hemel?*¹, pp. 272-273.

²⁵⁰“Ik mag haar niet opvatten op barthiaanse manier, als een ruimte, waarin het ‘Woord’ gepredikt wordt, die een plaats is voor het getuigenis des Woords, een ruimte, waar het ‘Woord’ gestalte aanneemt in Christus Jezus en in de prediking. Maar ik moet de kerk zien als gemeenschap uit mensen-materiaal gehouwen, een gemeenschap van hen, die met behoud der volle menselijkheid, weer andermaal zich dienstbaar gesteld zien aan Gods verheerlijking door de genade van Christus Jezus, die de schuld betaald heeft en uit kracht van de Heilige Geest, die alles uit Christus neemt en de mensen de tweede Adam inlijft en heiligt en tot glorie voert, en dat zeer concreet hier beneden.” (Schilder, *VW40-41*, p. 441).

“Fellowship through the Word, rather than community of souls”.²⁵¹ A published lecture on the article of the “communion of saints” in the apostolic creed has the same accent. The creed expresses it exactly as it is: it is a communion of saints, sanctified by God. Therefore, the essence of that community is what God has done, not what we do: “It does not depend on blood, race, or earth, nor on fellowship of souls or minds; it builds no bridges with human hands. [...] It is determined pneumatically, not psychologically, not biotically, not nationally, not regionally, not politically, not religiously, not socially, not aesthetically.”²⁵² Again, Schilder makes abundantly clear what this community is not. However, when it comes to positive assertions, Schilder points to the institutional realities of office, sacrament, and ecclesial discipline.²⁵³ He seems to be attracted to the idea of community as it was felt by many others in his time. The term keeps popping up in his work, but he is reluctant to fill this term with positive notions of ‘subjective’ relations. Schilder’s twelfth thesis concerning the church in 1935 states: “Personal experience is not a proper criterion for a congregation or a community as such.”²⁵⁴ He saw subjectivism as yet another great danger for the church, so that he could only fill the term ‘community’ with external objective realities. Nonetheless, the notion of community produces a better understanding of the church as God’s new humanity than the narrow emphasis on the weekly gathering around the Word can manage. It is clear that this gathering should be the heart of the fellowship, but it is a community nonetheless.

This is certainly a tension in Schilder’s thought between the church as God’s new humanity, a community founded by God himself, congregated by Christ, with roots in paradise and a destiny on the new earth on the one hand, and the church in its most narrow sense as the institution that preaches the Word and administers the sacraments on the other. The tension is somewhat alleviated by Schilder’s obvious emphasis on the second way of seeing the church. For that reason, we should attempt to interpret the broader sense within the narrower sense, which is what I think Schilder intends. The narrow institution then is and engenders by God’s Word a community of believers. This community must never imagine itself as a secluded community, but as the renewed humanity, a community with cosmic proportion and relevance. It should never forget that God’s kingdom depends on it, and that its primary purpose is not the church

²⁵¹Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 350.

²⁵²“Zij hangt dan ook niet af van bloed, ras of bodem, ook niet van geestes- of van zielscontact; en zij slaat ook geen bruggen met mensenhanden.[...] Zij is ‘pneumatisch’, en niet ‘psychisch’, niet biotisch, niet nationaal, niet regionaal, niet sociaal, niet politiek, niet religieus, niet aesthetisch bepaald.” (Schilder, *VWKerk II*, pp. 383-384).

²⁵³Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 389.

²⁵⁴“Want persoonlijke belevingen zijn geen eigenlijke criteria voor een vergadering, een gemeenschapsvorming, als zodanig.” (Schilder, *VWKerk II*, p. 248).

itself, but God's original mandate to do culture. Schilder himself seems to hint in this direction. Right after the passage on the 'Barthian' narrow church cited above, Schilder immediately turns to emphasize the close association of church and kingdom, as opposed to its 'narrow' understanding.²⁵⁵ Schilder's emphasis on the narrow church with a limited task should be understood from what we have described under the 'distinct church' in this and the previous chapter. Schilder wanted to keep the church to its primary task of being the church of Christ and preaching the Word. When the hub is weakened, everything is weakened. The world is the purpose, the church is the means. Schilder can, conversely, not escape some kind of understanding of the church as 'organism', despite all his violent rhetoric against it. The church, God's new humanity, pertains to all of life and is not limited to Sunday worship. This last quote would certainly have been endorsed by Schilder. Again, Schilder ends up closer to Kuyper than he himself, or certainly his followers, would maybe want.

4.3.5 Church and Confession Against National Socialism

Concrete recommendations for the church's role in the world are sought in vain in Schilder's oeuvre. However, when the Germans invaded the Netherlands, Schilder's life itself becomes an example of how he thought his theory ought to be put into practice. He showed what it meant to be shaped by the church by the Word of God for public engagement without fear for its consequences.

Schilder's first encounter with Nazism took place when he spent two extended periods at the University of Erlangen in the early 1930s working on his doctoral thesis. At this time he had the opportunity to observe the rise of Nazi ideology from up close. As I noted above, at that time he gave no evidence of much critical interaction with national socialism. In 1936 the synod of the *Gerreformeerde Kerken* put an ecclesial ban on membership in the National-Socialist Party. This was a contested decision. The *Hervormde* pastor Heiko Miskotte responded furiously, as did the Free University professor Herman Kuyper.²⁵⁶ The decision was one with serious implications, as many *Gereformeerden* could be found in the party's upper ranks.²⁵⁷ Notable is the example of the second ranking member of the party, Cornelis van Geelkerken, who was a member of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.²⁵⁸ On this occasion, Schilder's voice could be clearly heard, as he fiercely advocated the synod's decision. In his book with Kuyperian title *Geen duimbreed!*, Schilder defended this resistance.

²⁵⁵Schilder, *VW40-41*, p. 441.

²⁵⁶Ridderbos, *Strijd op twee fronten*, I, pp. 223-230.

²⁵⁷J. Kamphuis. *K. Schilder - een gereformeerd anti-fascist*. 13. Woord en Wereld, 1990, p. 44.

²⁵⁸Ridderbos, *Strijd op twee fronten*, I, pp. 189-190, 193-194.

When the Germans invaded the Netherlands in May 1940, Schilder was one of the first to warn his fellow countrymen on the pages of *De Reformatie*. He dropped the internal ecclesial debates in which he had become involved before the invasion, and turned his attention to a new national polemic. Schilder openly urged loyalty to Wilhelmina, the queen of the Netherlands, and prepared his readers for resistance against this anti-christian ideology. "Leave your hiding-place. Don your uniforms", was the title of one of his articles.²⁵⁹ Schilder's articles inspired many, well beyond the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. Dutch historian Loe de Jong writes how Schilder's articles had a "liberating effect on its readers". De Jong quotes the diary of a clerk in the Kampen town hall, who wrote: "What Schilder is doing with his articles for our people is magnificent! They must later be inscribed in gold! I memorized the long columns by heart, and made summaries before I passed the newspaper on to the next person!"²⁶⁰ Consequently, the circulation of Schilder's ecclesial weekly, *De Reformatie*, increased.²⁶¹

In August 1940 the occupying Germans decided they had had enough of Schilder's resistance articles, prohibiting *De Reformatie* and imprisoning him. Many in the country, including his theological adversaries, were shocked by his incarceration. In December the Germans released Schilder on the condition that he no longer publish, under threat of deportation to a concentration camp. Schilder obeyed this condition and thereafter no longer wrote. He did, however, continue to preach and to teach. In July 1942 the Germans sought to arrest Schilder again, but this time he escaped, going into hiding and disappearing entirely from public life until August 1944.²⁶²

This picture of Schilder as the ideologist of the resistance movement against the Nazis needs nuancing. Ridderbos has correctly noted that Schilder's opposition to national socialism was a wave.²⁶³ Apart from his silence while in Erlangen, Schilder's engagement with Nazis also virtually came to a halt after 1942. Indeed, Schilder went into hiding, but this did not stop him from carrying on energetically in the ecclesial battle. As we have seen Schilder do more often, he changed his focus. Just as radically as he had changed his focus from ecclesial

²⁵⁹"Den schuilkelder uit; uniform aan" in: *De Reformatie* 20-37, p. 284 (June 21, 1940).

²⁶⁰"Wat Schilder met zijn artikelen voor ons volk doet, is ont-zag-lijk! Ze moeten later in goud gegrift! Lange kolommen heb ik vrijwel van buiten geleerd en geëxcerpeerd voor ik de krant verder gaf" (L. de Jong. *Het koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Deel IV: mei '40 - maart '41. Tweede helft.* 's Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972, p. 620).

²⁶¹Harinck, *De Reformatie*, pp. 374-406.

²⁶²Harinck, *De Reformatie*, pp. 407-425, J. Ridderbos. "Schilder en de Tweede Wereldoorlog". In: *Geen duimbreed! Facetten van leven en werk van prof. dr. K. Schilder 1890-1952*. Ed. by G. Harinck and J. de Bruijn. Baarn: Ten Have, 1990, pp. 84-94, pp. 84-94 and Jong, *Nederland in de Tweede Wereldoorlog IV-2*, pp. 619-622.

²⁶³Ridderbos, "Schilder en de Tweede Wereldoorlog", p. 93.

polemics to national socialism in the spring of 1940, so he switched back in the summer of 1942. While many others were active in both the resistance movement and in ecclesial polemics, Schilder opted only for the latter. To this one might add Schilder's silence on the issue of antisemitism. Again, there is no question that he was opposed to antisemitism (see what I wrote in section 4.3.3 above). Nevertheless, he did not turn his stance into a concrete public statement.²⁶⁴ The same goes for armed resistance; Schilder did not oppose this, and many in his close proximity were indeed active in the illegal resistance. Schilder himself did not participate, nor did he call to it. Harinck suggested that this relates to Schilder's focus on the legal aspects of the occupation when it came to physical resistance.²⁶⁵

Our concern is, however, what Schilder's argument against the Nazis was, and how it fits in his theology. In his 1936 brochure *Not a square inch!*, Schilder writes that we need to resist a movement that is "based on false principles and intensely threatens ecclesial and Christian life".²⁶⁶ The National Socialist movement is precisely such a threat because of its totalitarian aspirations and the fact that "this worldview is in flagrant contradiction with the Christian faith."²⁶⁷ At this point, Schilder applies the Kuyperian view on the nature of the state as sovereign within its own sphere. The state has a moderate place and is restricted to its own sphere while respecting the sovereignty of the church, as well as that of the family, for example. With the national-socialist views on the state, the position and freedom of the church would certainly be compromised.

Schilder identifies not only competing worldviews, but also conflicting confessions. The confession as a central notion in Schilder's thought is not new (section 3.3.2, under 'confession'). In the debates concerning membership in the

²⁶⁴As an example, the public protest to the German measures against the Jews undertaken by the *Hervormde* pastor J. Koopmans forms a stark contrast to Schilder's silence (C. C. den Hertog, "Het spreken van de kerk in de theologie van dr. J. Koopmans". PhD thesis. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2018, pp. 69-73).

²⁶⁵Harinck, "Schilder en het verzet", pp. 39-55 and Ridderbos, "Schilder en de Tweede Wereldoorlog", pp. 84-94. On Schilder's antisemitism, see also Ridderbos, *Strijd op twee fronten*, p. 157. That Schilder himself had mixed feelings about his stance during the war is suggested in the subtle alterations that were made in the post-WWII publication of his 1940 articles (K. Schilder. *Bezet bezit: artikelen van de hand van prof. dr. K. Schilder, opgenomen in de nummers van de Reformatie uit de eerste maanden na de bezetting van Nederland - juni-augustus 1940*. Ed. by H. Knoop. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1945). These alterations served to suppress the impression that Schilder had opposed armed resistance (Harinck, "Schilder en het verzet", pp. 45-46).

²⁶⁶"...op grond van valsche beginselen en onder intense bedreiging van het kerkelijke en christelijke leven ..." (K. Schilder. *Geen duimbreed! een synodaal besluit inzake 't lidmaatschap van N.S.B. En C.D.U.* Kampen: Kok, 1936, p. 12).

²⁶⁷"deze wereld- en levensbeschouwing was evenwel met het christelijk geloof in flagrante tegenspraak" (Schilder, *Geen duimbreed!*, p. 15).

National Socialist Party, the confession now also plays a role in the realm of the kingdom, outside of the church. As such, the confession becomes important not only for the ecumenical relations of churches, but also for politics. In another brochure against the National Socialist Party, Schilder writes that it is vital to “show the connection between what we confess in church on Sunday and say before the face of the Lord in our personal life on the one hand, and what has to be done as a political party for the Dutch people on the other hand.”²⁶⁸ Around that same time, Schilder makes a similar statement when he exclaims that true unity of spirit is only found in a “faithfully confessing church, a confessing school, a confessing social organization, and a confessing political party.”²⁶⁹ This is followed by a reiteration of his critique on the Kuyperian spheres, as we also discussed it in the previous chapter (section 3.4.2). He writes: “The terrains are distinguished, but not separated. Fundamental differences that are compelling in one terrain, are equally compelling in the other.”²⁷⁰ The debates revolving around the ecclesial ban on national-socialist party membership caused Schilder to advance the confession as the connection between the church as institution and the role of believers in the kingdom.

When national socialism assumed power in the Netherlands through the Germans, Schilder continued his resistance in the same manner. In the first article from June 1940, Schilder wrote: “Everyone should remain in his office and remain loyal. Let prudence be distinguished from slavery.”²⁷¹ Now national socialism was no longer an ideological minority, but the very government of the Netherlands. The big debated issue came to be whether the Germans were to be seen as the lawful government. For *Gereformeerden*, loyalty and obedience to the lawful government was an important principle. Many argued that the Germans now represented the lawful government and had to be obeyed. As Harinck has demonstrated, Schilder wanted to follow the laws of the 1907 *Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land*.²⁷² This meant that he recognized the Germans as occupiers that had to be obeyed insofar as they followed Dutch law. The lawful government, however, was still the queen and

²⁶⁸“...den band zullen laten zien tusschen wat wij des Zondags in de kerk belijden, en in ons persoonlijk leven voor Gods aangezicht uitspreken ter eener zijde, en wat in partijverband voor het nederlandsche volk te verrichten staat ter anderder zijde.” (K. Schilder. *Geen stem voor de N.S.B.*. 's Gravenhage: Centraal Comité van Antirevolutionaire Kiesvereeningen, 1937, p. 7).

²⁶⁹“wél getrouw belijdende kerk, een belijdende school, een belijdende sociale organisatie, een beelijdende politieke partij.” (“Moet dat nu zóó? V” in: *De Reformatie* 16-21, p. 179 (February 21, 1936)).

²⁷⁰“De terreinen zijn wel onderscheiden, maar ze zijn niet gescheiden. Fundamenteele tegenstellingen, die op het ééne terrein dwingend zijn, die zijn het óók op het andere.” (“Moet dat nu zóó? V” in: *De Reformatie* 16-21, p. 179 (February 21, 1936)).

²⁷¹“Mijn schildt ende betrouwen...” (Schilder, *VW40-41*, p. 270).

²⁷²Harinck, “Schilder en het verzet”, p. 20.

her ministers in exile.

At the same time, Schilder urged his readers to brace for impact. We do not know what is to come, he wrote, but it will be tough and we need to prepare for spiritual battle.²⁷³ Schilder's emphasis on the personal cultural mandate of all believers served him well. The present time needed his voice, which urged for a personal and concrete obedience. The war was not a time of common grace. Priorities had to be set. Schilder's earlier apocalyptic emphasis returned at the outbreak of the war, and he himself made the connection to his First World War apocalypticism. In that first article written after the German invasion, Schilder recalls the service he had led after the First World War broke out in 1914, when he preached from Matthew 18:7 ("Woe to the world for temptations to sin! For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes!"). Schilder writes: "Who could have imagined that I would choose the same text again in May 1940?"²⁷⁴ In other instances, eschatology is clearly prominent. Schilder's first meditation after the outbreak of the war is about the Antichrist, and the second is taken from the book of Revelation.²⁷⁵ The apocalyptic, existential atmosphere of the collection of his early meditations, *Licht in den rook*¹, once more becomes tangible. On July 26 Schilder closes an article on the Antichrist with this characteristic passage: "The day of slaughter will come. And until that day, the sheep have but one priority: To listen to the voice of their Shepherd and to find the stable when he summons them."²⁷⁶ Schilder was under no illusion as to the nature of national socialism. It was going to bring about opposition that would require resistance evoking the struggles of the saints depicted in the book of Revelation. The war rekindled the slumbering eschatological character of Schilder's theology.

At the heart of this spiritual resistance was the church. Very much in line with his earlier emphases, Schilder writes in June 1940: "I could not imagine a greater misfortune for today than an unfaithful church that neglects the proclamation of the truth."²⁷⁷ The church is God's new humanity with cosmic proportions. For that reason, Schilder's ecclesial journal became of national importance during these first months after the invasion. The world is always of the greatest concern for the church. And this new humanity has laws of its

²⁷³Schilder, *VW40-41*, p. 282.

²⁷⁴"Wie had kunnen denken, dat ik in Mei 1940 hem weer zou kiezen?" (Schilder, *VW40-41*, p. 275).

²⁷⁵Schilder, *VWSchrift II*, pp. 339-343.

²⁷⁶"Maar de dag der slachting komt, — en tot dien tijd toe hebben de schapen dat ééne groote ding te doen: te hooren naar de stem van hunnen Herder, den stal te zoeken, als Hij ze derwaarts roept" (Schilder, *VW40-41*, p. 372).

²⁷⁷"Want in de ernstige dagen van thans is geen grooter ongeluk denkbaar dan een ontrouwe kerk, die de werkelijke belangen der waarheidsverkondiging zou verwaarlozen." (Schilder, *VW40-41*, p. 274).

own, the universal and catholic laws of the Creator himself. Therefore, when Schilder lectured on the church in 1941, he, clearly alluding to Nazi ideology, states that creation's diversity of race and blood will have to be reflected in the church.²⁷⁸ Schilder's creational church manoeuvred itself to a rigorously antithetical position with respect to Nazi ideology. And again, the confession plays a key role in forging the connection. In July 1940 Schilder opens his polemics with a collaborating *Gereformeerde* pastor like this:

"Every Reformed pastor bears a visible marker, as it were, a "mark and sign." This marker is the *Reformed confession*. Should someone say, "You are a minister, and should only be involved with the 'souls' entrusted to your care and not with 'politics,'" that pastor will respond: "I am sorry, but you have created a false dilemma. I may not have the duty to involve myself in *politics directly*, but I did subscribe to a confession. I have sworn an oath by this *confession*, as it were, and want to *present* myself before the *government* with confession in hand. And that confession indeed has a thing or two to say about the *principles* from which our *entire* life, including all politics, ought to proceed. Both governments and subject, in free as well as occupied territories, are always bound to them." And he will continue: "This confession has a thing or two to say (amounting to a *whole lot*, in fact) about God as the Creator and legislator of all, and for every sphere of life; about the infallible Word, which refuses to be trodden underfoot; about the church, which assembles most consciously, *'even though the rulers and edicts of princes were against it, and death or physical punishment might follow.'*"²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸See the quotes from section 4.3.3 above.

²⁷⁹"Ieder gereformeerd predikant loopt, om zoo te zeggen, met een zichtbaar kenmerk rond. Een 'merk- en veldteeken'. Het is de *gereformeerde belijdenis*. Zegt men hem: mijnheer, u is dominee, en u moet u dus alleen maar met de u aanbevolen 'zielen' en uw zielszorg bemoeien, en niet met 'politiek', dan antwoordt hij: pardon, mijnheer, u stelt de zaak niet juist; want al is het mijn taak niet, *rechtstreeksche politiek* te voeren, ik heb een *belijdenis* ondertekend; daar heb ik, om zoo te zeggen, op gezworen, daar wil ik ook me mee *presenteeren bij de overheid*. En die belijdenis zegt ter dege iets over de *beginselen*, waarvan *alle* leven, dus ook alle politieke leven, dient uit te gaan; beginselen, waaraan zoowel overheid als onderdaan, in bezet en in niet-bezet gebied, steeds zijn gebonden. Die belijdenis, zoo zal onze geïnterpelleerde predikant vervolgen, zegt iets, en dat 'iets' is *héél wat*, over God als schepper, en als wetgever van alle ding, en van allen levenskring; en over het onfeilbare Woord, dat zich niet laat vertreden, en over de kerk, die zich ook in eigen welbewuste daad vergadert, *'al waert schoon, dat de Overheydt ende der Princen mandamenten ende gheboden teghen waren, ende dat de doodt ende lijfflicke straffe daer aen hinghe'*." (Schilder, *VW40-41*, p. 330). The last sentence is a quote in early modern Dutch from article 28 of the Belgic Confession on the church.

This is a telling quote, since the confession has now become, more so than in 1936 or before, the very heart of the church's public character. The quote also serves adequately to show how much this was a matter of life and death for Schilder. After his incarceration, the Nazis forbade Schilder to publish anything that opposed the German occupiers. Schilder quickly realized that this meant he could no longer preach: "It seems impossible to write not even a single sermon that does not oppose the fundamental thoughts of what the occupiers think is best for the Netherlands."²⁸⁰ And for Schilder it was impossible not to preach; less than a month later, he started preaching again, and did not stop until he was forced to go into hiding. The dynamic church that lived in the tension of the covenant under the Word of God had to form the heart of spiritual resistance against this deeply anti-christian ideology.

Schilder's resistance against the German occupation has shown three things relating to the concrete application of his view on the church's public role. First, when an unchristian ideology enters the stage, a full-force response is necessary, no matter the consequences. Here Schilder's eschatological framework from the first period once again proves helpful: resistance is to be expected. Second, the church and its confession form the heart of this resistance. It is the church through its confession that is the Christian's umbilical cord in an anti-christian world. Thirdly, historically, this 'case' of the war suggests that Schilder's theology is indeed helpful in providing tools to resist dangerous and threatening ideologies. His emphasis on the church and the confession, the cultural mandate, individual responsibility, and eschatology all come to the aid here. Conversely, the 'wave-character' of Schilder's resistance suggests that his theology also runs the risk of focusing on the 'distinct church', even when the 'breadth' in hindsight ought to have demanded all the attention.

4.4 Theological Conclusion

The house of Schilder's thought now stands before us with even greater detail. Indeed, some rooms have been painted meticulously, while others remain unfinished, and the style of the furnishings in one room does not quite seem to match the style of another room. In this closing section, I will not repeat what I wrote at the end of chapter 3 in section 3.5. In my view, the framework is still standing. What I will do, however, is to provide an overview of what has been added to that framework.

²⁸⁰"ik zie eigenlijk geen kans één preek te houden, die *niet* zou ingaan tegen de grondgedachten van wat de Rijkscommissaris rekent tot den arbeid tot Nederlands wederopbouw." ("K. Schilder aan curatoren Theologische Hogeschool te Kampen, December 10, 1940" in: Puchinger, *Ontmoetingen met Schilder*, p. 119).

This chapter shows that the two lines in Schilder's thought—the broad and the deep, the distinct character of the church and its engagement with the world—were for him two sides of the same coin. Both these lines deepened and were developed in this chapter. The emphasis on the distinct nature of the church, its internal affairs, so to speak, is what receives most of the attention. The intense pluriformity polemics and the role Schilder played in the synods of 1936 and 1943 were most demanding on his time. During the war, Schilder briefly assumed a national role, but soon thereafter increasingly turned his attention back to the ecclesial polemics. For Schilder, there was no inconsistency in this. The church was, after all, the instrument for the world. It is worth considering how both aspects were developed.

As to the church's distinct nature, its unity becomes a key concern. This leads to increasing criticism on the Kuyperian notion of pluriformity, together with a critique on the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, where Schilder's dynamic emphasis returns. This is part of a broader development where dialectical elements in his thought, in particular the primacy of faith in theological knowledge, brings him into opposition with Kuyper. In this line, Schilder developed a critique of the invisible church, as it has been anticipated in the previous period. This leads him to disconnect the church from predestination. On the one hand, the '*nulla salus extra ecclesiam*' of the Belgic Confession is understood eschatologically by Schilder: the church is unfinished until the end of times, God may gather people into the church at their death. On the other hand, Schilder distances him from a narrowing of salvation to the eschaton, understanding salvation also as a reality that is realized in the present, notably in the church. The emphasis on the visible institution was further enhanced in Schilder's understanding of the church as a lawful church of which only one could be found in one place. The relationship between the lawful church and the true church is blurry, and Schilder never applies the latter term to a concrete church and sometimes even calls it a tendency. Schilder's vagueness on this point actually reflects the tension between the dynamic and the static in his ecclesiology.

A surprising latecomer in this period is the notion of the covenant, which quickly goes on to become a core feature of Schilder's theology. The covenant basically takes the shape of everything he has said thus far about the church. Consequently, he calls the church the circle of the covenant, virtually identifying the two with each other. Schilder then also changes existing notions to bring them in line with his scheme, increasing the tension with the Kuyperian establishment. Schilder stressed the unity of the covenant from creation to the present day, denying the separate existence of a covenant of works and a covenant of grace. Here Schilder's deep creational emphases return. Furthermore, the covenant is for him to be understood as an outward and visible reality, just like

the church. Covenant and election are distinct categories. The covenant does not function for Schilder as something to rely on for salvation, since it rather functions as a prod urging activity and renewed obedience. The covenant is a dynamic reality, just like the church. The theological benefit of this addition is that Schilder now has a framework where the *praesentia salutis* fits in perfectly. With the *pactum salutis* as the origin and destination of the covenant with the human race, Schilder can tie human responsibility and the church closely to the doctrine of God. In the covenant, God himself is present through humans.

As to the church's public engagement, this period witnesses a movement from Kuyper to Barth, albeit without leaving neo-Calvinist premises. Schilder seeks to emphasize that God is radically different from this world, while at the same affirming his proximity to his people in his creation. Schilder provides us with a more developed eschatology, where both continuity and discontinuity are emphasized. The real move away from Kuyper comes in the way Schilder abandons notions of commonness like general revelation and common grace. We also saw that Schilder used the backdoor of common temperance to avoid an isolated Christian culture. All this serves his earlier emphasis on a radically faith-based cultural mandate. This dynamic understanding of both culture and the church is now put into the larger framework of Schilder's doctrine of God, who "possesses everything simultaneously in the same manner", eschewing all notions of logical or temporal order in God. The dynamic view on culture and church, as well as Schilder's view on the present, fit in this view of a timeless God.

The instrumental role of the church in the cultural mandate was further confirmed in the unprecedented way Schilder drew lines from the church back to before the fall and ahead into the eschaton. The essence of the church is a creational matter, although its present characteristics of Word and Sacrament are only part of the institution in the present. The tension between the narrow definition of the church as the Sunday institution and the new humanity persists in Schilder's critique of the church as organism. The church as organism did not fit his institutional emphasis. The kingdom of God replaces Kuyper's organic church, but the way Schilder keeps understanding the church as a community and a new humanity means that some notion of the organic church continues to persist in his thought.

The concrete case of Schilder's opposition to national socialism confirms what his thought in this period had suggested, namely that the primary focus remains on the distinct nature of the church and its confession. The world was not out of sight, however. New in Schilder's oeuvre is the confession's functions as not only a key ecclesial document, but also the connector between the individual in the world and the church. Personal adherence to the church's

confession is what is at stake in a person's public life.

Vrijmaking: Ideas to the Test 1944-1952

If we were to ask Schilder what the most significant event in his life was, he would certainly point to the ecclesial schism in 1944. Following Schilder's death, his close friend Kees Veenhof wrote: "The heaviest struggle of Schilder's life awaited him after his imprisonment. That was by far the most important, since it was concentrated on the church!"¹ In August 1944, during one of the tensest periods of the Second World War, a series of dramatic events unfolded, leading a group of concerned members of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* to call for a public meeting and to read "a declaration of liberation or return", a clear allusion to the document that had been used in 1834 at the *Afscheiding*.² This meeting was attended by a large group of Reformed people who had traveled by train, notwithstanding the risk of British planes that were trying to destabilize the infrastructure that the German occupiers were using to their advantage. This public meeting was for Schilder his first public appearance after having gone underground for two years, seeking to escape the threat of a second incarceration. The German authorities in the Netherlands had let it be known that Schilder was no longer being sought, and could speak and write freely on theological issues.³ From one of the prominent voices in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, Schilder had become the leader of a growing group of people who felt that they had no choice but to go a separate direction. This group would rapidly become a separate

¹Veenhof, *Gedenkt uw voorgangeren*, p. 19.

²K. Schilder. *Verzamelde werken 1942-1944*. Ed. by W. G. de Vries. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1998, pp. 524-529.

³For a detailed account, see Ridderbos, *Strijd op twee fronten*, pp. II, 340-364. An attempt to have the warrant for his arrest withdrawn in 1943 had failed. In the summer of 1944 the occupiers claimed that Schilder had only been sought for a hearing in 1942, and that the information they were after had since been gained from elsewhere. These German claims seemed questionable. It is clear at least that the authorities were aware of tensions in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, and sought to influence the synod in a way that would damage the resistance movement.

church that comprised about ten percent of the members of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, and Schilder emerged as the most prominent voice in that church during the final years leading up to his unexpected death in 1952.

In this chapter I will first relate in greater detail what happened to Schilder during these years, and also describe his role in the schism. Biography has proven to be necessary for understanding Schilder throughout this study, and this is even more so for this last period of his life. I also want to show how Schilder's role in the schism fits his theological emphases. Secondly, we will shift our attention to the period after the schism. Schilder's role is now no longer that of a critic of the broader *Gereformeerde Kerken*, since he has become the leader of a 'new' church. No matter how insistent he was that there was no new church and no leaders, that still was the reality.⁴ The changed circumstances require a more specific question for this final period. Rather than simply asking how Schilder's thought on the church developed in this period, we will consider how it was applied in this new situation. In some ways Schilder now found himself in a position to shape the church he had argued for all those years. His ideas were thus being put to the test.

My focus in this chapter will therefore be on seeing how the new context shapes his thought. Such an approach is also justified by the nature of the sources, as Schilder's work is dominated by the schism and the debates within the new church. Exceptions are formed by his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism and some of the *dictaten* from this period. For this reason, these sources were already discussed in the previous chapter insofar as they were relevant for my purpose. Accordingly, here I will only be looking for development in his thought in the light of the new, post-schism context. Now that we have seen the rough drawings in chapter 2, the framework in chapter 3, and the furnishings in chapter 4, we will now see people entering the house and beginning to live in it. Of course, the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* were not a pure product of Schilder's thought. The schism was multilayered, and although Schilder's leadership was uncontested, people had different motivations to follow him in the schism. My focus will thus be on Schilder's position within this new context. It will, however, become clear that Schilder came to face the consequences of some of his own ideas.

It comes as no surprise that two important tensions I have already noted in Schilder's thought surface quickly and demand the bulk of the attention. The first concerns the 'depth' line on the church's faithfulness. Naturally, the schism tabled the question of the lawful and true church. On this issue, the polarity between the dynamic and institutional church is inclined towards the latter. Again without a profound change in Schilder's thought, the question

⁴"Goed vrijgemaakt" in: *De Reformatie* 26-29, p. 242 (April 21, 1951).

of the lawful church comes to dominate as it never had before. Consequently, Schilder begins to apply the label of the true church to his own church more readily. While the true church became a more outspoken reality, the question of who are in and who are out also presented itself. Here Schilder will use an older concern for the breadth provided by the confession in this new context, warning against the sectarian temptation he detected in the newly founded churches.

The second tension is that of the 'broad' church: How does the church relate to the other spheres? How does the church relate to the kingdom? While Schilder is his usual decisive self on the first question, on the second point he begins to waver. It is almost as if he himself realized that there were tensions in his thought that remained unresolved and were difficult to apply in a concrete context. And yet, at least the twofold concern for both depth and breadth remains intact even in this final episode of his life.

5.1 **Vrijmaking, Liberation, Apocalypse**

In the previous chapter, I frequently pointed ahead to the schism that occurred in 1944.⁵ The roots of this multilayered ecclesial division, as well as Schilder's role in it, extend at least as far back as the mid-1930s, when Schilder's internal *Gereformeerde Kerken* polemics were becoming increasingly intense. At the same time, the Reformational Movement was gaining momentum in the churches as a movement of radical renewal, meeting with considerable opposition from the establishment. The ecclesial schism occurred at the apex of the German occupation of the Netherlands. At first glance this coincidence may look absurd, but there is a connection between the two, as I will show. This connection also manifests itself in the resurgence of the apocalypticism of the post-World War I climate. This climate came to particularly strong expression in the churches of the schism as well as in Schilder's thought. The war fueled an apocalyptic awareness which in turn elevated the tensions in the church to a new level. In this section, I will first describe the events that led to the schism and their relation to the events of the war. Then I will show how the apocalyptic awareness is intimately connected with both the schism and the new war.

5.1.1 **Two Liberations**

The concrete occasion for the schism was the synod of Sneek, which started in 1939 and dealt with a number of 'hot issues' that had been tabled by the committees appointed at the 1936 synod.⁶ That synod had decided to name theological

⁵See chart (A.1) and glossary for an overview of the various schisms and denominations.

⁶In Dutch Reformed church polity, a synod can only treat matters that are passed on to it by a 'minor assembly' or by the previous synod. A synod therefore has a limited right to set its own

adversaries together to these committees, in the hope that they would become reconciled in the process. Thus, Hepp, Schilder, H.H. Kuyper, and Vollenhoven were expected to cooperate. Unfortunately, this attempt failed. The committee fell apart and presented two independent and different recommendations to the 1939 synod. Schilder was very unhappy that these theological hot issues had found their way on the synod's agenda. In his view, they had not been tabled by any local church, and for that reason had no legitimate place on the synod's agenda.⁷ What Schilder wanted was a church with fierce polemics and a variety of opinions that were debated publicly. Debates were for him a sign of a healthy church, a church that lived in the tension of the Sermon of the Mount. The synod of 1936 had had enough of the professorial polemics, however, and wanted to settle the matter once for all and initiate a climate of greater peace and harmony.

Shortly after the synod began, the German forces invaded the Netherlands. A strong and united church is more necessary than ever, Schilder wrote in his first article following the invasion: "In times of need, a spirit of concord is required, more than ever." And Schilder believed that "a sponge over the blackboard" was the best way to reach that unity and strength.⁸ Indeed, the shadow of the war hung over the synod, as Schilder wrote in 1939, even before the invasion.⁹ The uncertain times that had persisted in Western Europe for the past decades were now pushing to a climax. While for Schilder this climax turned him to an apocalyptic interpretation of his time and thus to fiercer polemics, the synod longed for concord and peace within the church. The war confirmed the necessity of the synod's pursuits, and it was decided that the hot issues would be treated with a view to a final conclusion so as to allow the church to focus on what really mattered.

Despite Schilder's warnings, the synod, which by then had moved to the city of Utrecht for practical reasons, decided in December 1941 to continue the discussion of the theological issues. Schilder disagreed with this turn of

agenda. See this quote article 30 of the Church Order of Dordt (version of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* from 1933 onwards): "A major assembly shall deal with those matters only which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to the churches of the major assembly in common." The original reads: "In meerdere vergaderingen zal men niet handelen, dan 't gene dat in mindere niet heeft afgehandeld kunnen worden, of dat tot de kerken der meerdere vergadering in 't gemeen behoort."

⁷K. Schilder and D. H. T. Vollenhoven. *Rapporten I-VIII door K. Schilder en D.H.Th. Vollenhoven, als leden van de commissie, benoemd door de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, gehouden te Amsterdam 1936 (Acta art. 212, 273 sub 36)*. 1939, pp. II-1-7.

⁸"Want in tijden van nood hebben we eendracht noodiger dan ooit" "de spons over de lei" (Schilder, *VW40-41*, p. 274).

⁹Schilder, *VW40-41*, p. 19.

events, and left the synod, never to return.¹⁰ Schilder's response was surprising compared to his reaction to the previous synod's decision to treat the issues. At that time he did not agree for the reason that the issues had not been raised directly by the churches. However, he was confident that the outcome would be unproblematic, and he clearly expected that a consensus could be reached within the committee.¹¹ The change in attitude between 1936 and 1939 shows how much personal relations, as well as the fear of losing influence, played a part in the tensions that developed in the 1940s. In 1926 and in 1936 the synodical wind had blown favorably for Schilder, but now his own views were under scrutiny and things did not look particularly favorable for him.

In June 1942 the synod approved a number of doctrinal decisions on common grace, the immortality of the soul, the two natures of Christ, the covenant of grace, and self-examination.¹² The decision on the pluriformity of the church was postponed until the next synod.¹³ These decisions were a defeat for Schilder. On common grace and the covenant of grace the synod decided against Schilder. The doctrinal pronouncements on the soul and the natures of Christ represented criticism of the views of his friend Vollenhoven. Schilder was asked to submit to the decisions and to refrain from public activity against them. What complicated the matter was the fact that Schilder had been forced to go underground after being warned that the Germans were seeking to arrest him again. According to Schilder, he was unable to meet with the synodical delegations that sought to discuss the matter with him. This claim met with scepticism from the synod. It wrote: If your conditions allow you to send letters to churches, "would it not be the duty of the Christian man to accept the synod's invitation to speak, notwithstanding the dangers you fear?"¹⁴ We know that Schilder lived in hiding, but the extent to which this indeed prevented him from coming to the synod remains unclear. Lying about his circumstances hardly fits what we know of Schilder's character, but there is no doubt that he had a preference for written communication in official matters like these. His approach focused strongly on the legal aspects of the matter. In the developments of the following years, Schilder focused solely on a perspective from the church's legal aspects. To him, the synod's request for a conversation with him was like a judge who asks to speak informally with the convict without changing anything in the sentence. It may also be that Schilder indeed feared the consequences of disobeying the Nazis in these times of heightened danger. And yet, there are other instances as

¹⁰*Acta van de Voortgezette Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland van Sneek 1939*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1943, p. 70.

¹¹"Indrukken van de Synode" in: *De Reformatie* 17-4, p. 26-27 (October 23, 1936).

¹²*Acta Sneek 1939-1943*, pp. 95-97.

¹³*Acta Sneek 1939-1943*, p. 100.

¹⁴*Acta Sneek 1939-1943*, p. 280.

well where we are left puzzled by Schilder's behavior during the war, as seen in the previous chapter (section 4.3.5).¹⁵

In the second half of 1942 Schilder, together with a number of churches, sent a letter to the synod asking it to end its self-prolongation. The synod claimed that such prolongation was necessary and allowed for by the church order. It was only in April 1943 that the synod was finally brought to a close. Yet not long thereafter, a new synod was convoked in Utrecht according to the three-year interval set by the Church Order (following on the previous synod, which officially had been that of 1939).¹⁶ This new synod, where Berkouwer presided, very quickly denied all appeals arising from the churches, and underlined the doctrinal decisions made by the previous synod. In December 1943 Schilder asked the synod not to overturn the doctrinal decisions, but simply to refrain from enforcing the decisions on those who could not agree. To the fury of the synod, Schilder sent a copy of this letter to all churches. As a consequence, the conflict quickly escalated. The synod was cornered and now turned to drastic measures. Its response came in February 1944, when it demanded unconditional submission from Schilder. He was required to offer an apology for his actions, to teach only in line with the synod's decisions, and to refrain from public statements contravening them.¹⁷ In his response, Schilder refused to answer the questions, again denying the synod's right of jurisdiction to ask him these questions on the grounds that no church had asked the synod to initiate such an investigation. On March 23 the synod suspended Schilder as minister of the Word and professor of theology for a period of three months. Others followed, like Schilder's nephew Herman Schilder, who was not accepted as a minister of the Word because he refused to consent to the synod's doctrinal decisions. Similarly, the emeritus professor of New Testament S. Greijdanus was suspended upon his refusal to ratify the decisions. On July 31, after the synod had added another month to Schilder's suspension, a meeting was arranged between Schilder and synodical representatives. Schilder refused to budge and said that the only way to move forward was to end the suspension which had unjustly grieved and slandered him.¹⁸ The synod saw no other way but to dismiss Schilder as minister and professor on August 3.¹⁹ What followed was the public meeting of August 11 which was mentioned in opening this chapter, and would become the cradle of a new schism.²⁰

¹⁵Ridderbos, *Strijd op twee fronten*, pp. II, 247-264, 288-291 and Schilder, *VW42-44*, pp. 15-18.

¹⁶See article 50 of the 1933 *Gereformeerde Kerken* Church Order.

¹⁷Schilder, *VW42-44*, p. 173.

¹⁸Schilder, *VW42-44*, p. 280.

¹⁹Schilder, *VW42-44*, p. 282.

²⁰Ridderbos, *Strijd op twee fronten*, pp. II, 292-301, 310-314, 332-360 and Schilder, *VW42-*

In the years that followed, the number of people that followed Schilder's group grew beyond the expectations of either party to the conflict. The synod may have had in mind what happened in 1926, when Geelkerken was deposed. On that occasion, just thirteen ministers and around 7,000 members left the churches to form a new denomination. However, by the time of Schilder's death in 1952, nearly 200 ministers and no less than 90,000 members, amounting to nearly ten percent of the total membership of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, had followed Schilder and Greijdanus. To this number one might add also the many who sided with Schilder, but were unwilling to leave their church. As such, the *Gereformeerde Kerken* was left in a disillusioned state, while the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* felt encouraged and saw new possibilities.²¹ Already in the first issue of *De Reformatie* that appeared after the war, Schilder wrote that he could now "breathe anew in a purified ecclesial climate".²² As early as at that first meeting held in August 1944, with a highly encouraging turn-out, informal discussions were held about the appointment of professors for a new seminary in Kampen. Thus, the climate of defeat quickly turned into a climate of positive activism, as it would become so characteristic of the later *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*.²³

The years following the war and the schism, Schilder found himself a church leader. This was a position he neither sought nor appreciated. It was different from the position he had held before the war in the broader *Gereformeerde Kerken*, where he always was the renewer and the establishment's gadfly on the sidelines. Now much of his work was devoted to the matters that were keeping the young churches busy.²⁴ Eight years to the day after Schilder's suspension, on March 23, 1952, Schilder unexpectedly passed away. The week before he had written in *De Reformatie* that the doctor had recommended him to take some rest. "Nothing special", he assured his readers, but a week later he passed away at the age of 61.²⁵ His heart had failed him. We can only speculate on the extent to which the schism and its consequences laid a burden on him too heavy to bear.

44, pp. 19-21.

²¹Harinck and Berkelaar, *Domineesfabriek*, p. 180 and R. Kuiper and W. Bouwman, eds. *Vuur en vlam: de organisatie van het vrijgemaakt-gereformeerde leven 1944-1994*. Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1999, p. 338.

²²"het her-ademen in een gezuiverde kerkelijke atmosfeer" (Schilder, *VW42-44*, p. 121).

²³Harinck and Berkelaar, *Domineesfabriek*, pp. 180-188 and R. Kuiper. "Vrijmaking of wederkeer". In: *Vuur en vlam: aspecten van het vrijgemaakt-gereformeerde leven 1944-1969*. Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1994, pp. 16-18.

²⁴On Schilder's failing leadership, see E. J. Terpstra. "K. Schilder en P. Jongeling: het echec van Schilders leiderschap". In: *Vrijgemaakte vreemdelingen*. Ed. by M. te Velde and H. Werkman. TU-Bezinningsreeks 6. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2007, pp. 162-165.

²⁵"Kerkelijk Leven" in: *De Reformatie* 27-26, p. 207 (March 29, 1952).

5.1.2 Apocalypse Again

The time after the Second World War was, like the period following the Great War, one characterized by apocalypticism. The aftermath of the Great War was a time of profound cultural disappointment with the nineteenth century, fueling a sense of loss and apocalyptic tendencies. For the Netherlands in particular, the Second World War was of much greater impact for the obvious reason that the war had now physically crossed its borders. In the winter of 1944 a famine had plagued the Western provinces that had not yet been liberated by the Allied Forces. Moreover, the development and use of the atomic bomb by the U.S. Army in 1945 gave the apocalypticism not only a cultural, but also a physical side. The human race had now proved capable of destruction on an unprecedented scale. The rising tensions between Russia and the United States from 1947 onwards only added fuel to the fire.²⁶

At the occasion of New Year's Eve 1945, Schilder give expression to this climate in *De Reformatie*:

More than ever this year has reminded us of the prophecies the church received at the beginning of the Christian era. The prophecies of the coming Christ. The image of the future they depict is increasingly proving their veracity. A unity of peoples is needed to prepare the way for the Antichrist – and do we indeed not read of a world-state? The quickened pace at which the final powers of destruction are unleashed is, so we are told in apocalyptic imagery, a condition for the second coming of Christ; they are upon us and we hold our breath. On one occasion in the final days, one voice must be able to speak to the United Peoples – are we not almost there?”²⁷

The atomic bomb, the United Nations founded in October 1945, combined with technological progress, made it hard to miss the parallels with the book

²⁶L. de Jong. *Het koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Deel 12. Epiloog. Eerste helft.* 's Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1988, pp. 2-5.

²⁷“Zoo ooit, dan heeft wel dit jaar ons herinnerd aan de profetieën, die de kerk ontving aan 't begin van onze christelijke jaartelling. De profetieën van den naderenden Christus. Het toekomstbeeld, dat zij ons voorhielden, begint al duidelijker zich te bewijzen als waarachtig. Een eenheid van de volkeren is noodig om den antichrist een podium te bereiden; en lezen we niet van een wereld-staat? Het in versneld tempo ontketenen van definitieve krachten der verwoesting is ons als vóór-waarde voor Christus wederkomst geteekend in apocalyptische beelden; we zien ze over ons komen, en houden den adem in. In één moment moet in het laatst der dagen één stem tot de Vereenigde Volkeren kunnen spreken — en is 't niet haast zoover?” (K. Schilder. *Verzamelde werken 1944-1945*. Ed. by W. G. de Vries and G. Harinck. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2001, p. 468).

of Revelation. The predecessor of the United Nations, the League of Nations, was also criticized along the same lines by the *Gereformeerden*, as well as by Schilder, with worldwide unity being one of the signs of the Antichrist, the beast of the apocalypse (see Rev. 13). Any unity based on something other than Christ in the Word of God was a false unity, and thus a potential matrix of the anti-Christ. The ecumenical movement was identified accordingly, especially in the way it, in Schilder's view, was following the political trends of his time rather than Scripture and the confession.²⁸ The Christian and biblical ring to the ecumenical movement made it all the more suspect: a convincing false Christ. Both movements had much momentum after the devastations of the Second World War. In 1952 things had only gotten worse. In a sermon Schilder identified the loss of the colonies in present-day Indonesia, as well as the United Nations and the emerging Cold War, as "signs of the parousia of Christ": "We know another war will come [...] and that we are speeding towards the end, at God's pace."²⁹

The New Year's Eve article continues with the "isolation" and "loneliness" Schilder experienced after the schism in 1944. These sentiments too found a close match in the reigning apocalyptic sentiment. According to Schilder, all these things had been foretold and were therefore a great comfort. The *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* were like the "Shear-Jasub", a remnant will return (Is. 7:3), in the days before the first coming of Christ.³⁰ In his 1947 Easter meditation Schilder writes: "In this world that is racing towards the final struggle between Christ and Antichrist, we find a dwindling cluster of Christians engaging in proclamation on Easter Sunday."³¹

The apocalyptic awareness also impacted Schilder's cultural ambitions. *Christ and Culture*, an expanded version of the 1932 article "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven", was now awash with apocalyptic references that had been absent from the previous edition.³² For instance, Schilder adds the notion of falling in love with culture while forgetting its Creator as a description of contemporary

²⁸Schilder, *VWKerk III*, pp. 221-226.

²⁹"En wij weten, dat dit alles tekenen zijn van de wederkomst van Christus. [...] En we weten, dat er toch weer een oorlog komen zal, [...] maar we weten wel dat we met snelle schreden, in Gods maat, naar het einde gaan." (Schilder, *VWPreken III*, pp. 195-196).

³⁰Schilder, *VW44-45*, p. 469.

³¹"In zoo'n naar de laatste worsteling tusschen Christus en Antichrist zich jachtende wereld, staat nu een slinkend hoopje christenen op Paaschzondag te verkondigen." (Schilder, *VWSchrift III*, p. 236).

³²As the 'cultural handbook' of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*, *Christus en cultuur* has been reprinted six times in Dutch. It is also Schilder's most translated book. A Japanese translation was published in 1974 (K. Schilder. キリストと文化. Trans. by 良知. 山中. 東京: すぐ書房, 1974), an English translation in 1977 (K. Schilder. *Christ and Culture*. Trans. by G. van Rongen. Winnipeg: Premier, 1977), a Spanish translation in 2010 (K. Schilder. *Cristo y La Cultura*. Trans. by D. H. Terán. Publicaciones Contra Mundum, 2010), a new annotated English

culture. This is a phenomenon that is part of the approaching end times. It leads Schilder to a more critical stance towards the culture of his time. Especially the movies and sports of his time become an example of this falling in love with culture.³³ True cultural work will diminish, the cultural mandate will be replaced by love for culture itself: “But one should add that this harsh reality will not be acknowledged, except among the greatly reduced number of the last, persecuted Christians.”³⁴ Schilder seems to be suggesting here that the time for the abstinence option (section 3.4.1) has come, since the end is drawing near. Indeed, to the original section on cultural abstinence from 1932 he adds a description of the growing movement of socialism (the Dutch socialists had assumed power after the War) and its expansion of the sphere of the state as a sign of the Antichrist.³⁵

The third revised edition of *Licht in de rook*³, published in 1951, is also important in this context. Above I referred to the cultural program of the first edition of this book as “meagre” (2.3.3) and apocalyptic. It is no coincidence that this work is back on the table in 1951. The line of argument is the same, but where in 1924 communism represented the main threat to be dealt with, now Schilder applies his book to the new context. The apocalyptic tendency and the meagre cultural program are the same. The new context in the Netherlands is characterized by what Schilder calls the “misery of the period Schermerhorn-Doorbraak-demise.”³⁶

This apocalyptic sentiment was not limited to Schilder, but widespread throughout the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*.³⁷ The feeling of being persecuted and oppressed that characterized the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*, com-

translation appeared in 2015 (Schilder, *Christ and Culture*), and a Korean translation in 2017 (K. Schilder. 그리스도와 문화. Trans. by 성은. 손. 서울: 지평서원, 2017). These recent translations have to be understood against the backdrop of the renewed international interest in neo-Calvinist thought (section 1.1).

³³Schilder, *Christus en cultuur*, pp. 58, 83, 95 (ET Schilder, *Christ and Culture*, pp. 83-84, 119, 138).

³⁴Schilder, *Christ and Culture*, p. 121. “Alleen maar: erkend zal die harde werkelijkheid niet worden, tenzij dan in den gesmaldeelden kring der laatste, vervolgte, christenen” (Schilder, *Christus en cultuur*, p. 85).

³⁵Schilder, *Christus en cultuur*, p. 96 (ET Schilder, *Christ and Culture*, p. 139).

³⁶“de narigheid van de periode-Schermerhorn-doorbraak-ondergang” (“Boekbespreking: De Openbaring van Johannes en het Sociale Leven” in: *De Reformatie* 27-11, p. 92-93 (December 15, 1951)). Wim Schermerhorn (1894-1977) was the Dutch Prime Minister from 1945 to 1946, the first from the Labor party, heralding a time of Labor party dominance in the Netherlands. The *Doorbraak* was closely associated with the Labor party: It was an attempt to overcome the confessional dividing lines in Dutch society in the postwar climate. See further below and also the glossary.

³⁷See, e.g., B. Holwerda. *De kerk in het eindgericht*. Nederlandsche Bond van (vrijgemaakte) J.V. op G.G. Bond van Geref. M.V. in Nederland, 1950, where he identified the whore of Babylon in Revelation 17 with the *Gereformeerde Kerken*.

bined with the cultural developments of the time, were a fruitful cocktail for a strong apocalyptic awareness. In some ways, the apocalyptic sentiment functioned as a broad justification for the schism and the radicalism of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*.

In the development of Schilder's thought, this meant a return to earlier emphases that dated back to the beginning of the War. In the first period of Schilder's life, we noted the overarching dominance of eschatology. His depiction of the church as a small and insignificant corner of society in an apocalyptic context had now become reality. This emphasis had moved to the background in subsequent years, albeit without failing to leave a permanent mark on his theology. As is often the case with Schilder, the changed context impacts his writings, and so the eschatological focus returns with unprecedented power. This begins in the years leading up to the German invasion, as I noted in chapter 4, and continues and becomes even stronger in this period, enhanced by the schism.

Theologically, the apocalyptic sentiment functions as a reinforcement of Schilder's emphasis on the tension of the Christian life, such that both came to be shared by many of his followers. Again, it was in times of war and uncertainty that Schilder's theology thrived. It is in such circumstances that his theology had enough force to shape a church. This is not to suggest that the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* were a uniform Schilder movement; nevertheless, there is no doubt that Schilder's theology was of considerable influence there.

5.2 Distinct Church: Apology of the Schism

I have now shown how Schilder became the leader of an ecclesial schism within the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. The schism itself is complex and multifaceted, with a web of theological, sociological, and psychological factors at its roots. With a view to the present study, I am interested in the theological explanation. How can Schilder's posture in the schism be explained from his theology? Is this a new development or a logical consequence?

5.2.1 Lawful Church

To that end, we do well to turn our attention first to Schilder's own account of the schism and his extensive apology for it. As I noted, the schism is the most dominant topic by far in Schilder's writings after it took place. It clearly occupied his mind and burdened him like nothing else. Much of what he wrote in *De Reformatie* directly addressed the issue, which lurks behind nearly every other

work from the time, including even his Heidelberg Catechism commentary.³⁸ As before, also Schilder's classroom lectures are perhaps most reflective of what was on his mind. In 1935 Schilder inserted a special lecture into his dogmatics classes on Karl Barth's most recent work. In 1942 the topic of his lectures were the polemics over the church. In 1945, when he started teaching his dogmatics classes in the new theological school of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*, his topic was the doctrinal decisions of the 1943 synod that had led to his expulsion.³⁹ The opening question of these lectures captures adequately what was at stake for Schilder. The church can and should make binding statements. It should, however, only do so according to God's Word. In other words, the church should "either dissolve its binding, or else preach its doctrine from the rooftops."⁴⁰ If the church makes binding claims, then it needs to be convinced that departure on that point is a matter of utmost importance, and be convicted that this is so according to the Word of God. In the rest of the lectures, Schilder continues arguing that the central binding statement that "the seed of the covenant is presumed to be born again and sanctified in Christ according to God's promise" is neither in accordance with God's Word, nor in line with the Reformed tradition.⁴¹ For Schilder, however, the core problem was not a matter of dogmatics, but church polity: "In regard to the question of the suspension, everything actually came down to article 31", Schilder writes in 1945, referring to the 31st article of the Church Order.⁴²

Schilder repeatedly insisted that the synod had been unlawful because it had prolonged itself, and because it had issued doctrinal statements that the churches had not requested it to make.⁴³ Especially when it started to enforce these decisions on active ministers and candidates for ministry, it went beyond its authority. It was not without reason that Schilder called them the "synodocratic" churches, over against his "liberated" churches.⁴⁴ These words do not have reference to doctrine, but to church polity. This conviction is also reflected in the name initially adopted by the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*: "The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (maintaining article 31 of the church order)".⁴⁵ Article 31 addresses the authority of classes and synods. That author-

³⁸See, e.g., Schilder, *HC II*, p. 321.

³⁹K. Schilder. *Dogmahistorisch praeadvies: Intermezzo-college Dogmatiek over het Praeadvies van Commissie I (1943)*. Ed. by C. J. Breen, J. Faber, and C. Trimp. 1st ed. 1946.

⁴⁰"Zij moet haar binding opheffen of haar leer van de daken prediken." (Schilder, *Dictaat Praeadvies*, p. 4).

⁴¹Schilder, *Dictaat Praeadvies*, p. 2.

⁴²"Want op artikel 31 zat eigenlijk alles vast in de bekende schorsings-kwesties." (Schilder, *VW44-45*, p. 354).

⁴³Schilder, *VW42-44*, pp. 46, 306-314.

⁴⁴Schilder, *VW44-45*, p. 114.

⁴⁵Schilder, *VW44-45*, pp. 353-358.

ity is valid only when “minor assemblies” have requested the “major assembly” to deal with an issue, and when its decrees are not “proved to be in conflict with the Word of God and the Church Order”. This legal notion also surfaces in a fictitious conversation that Schilder published in *De Reformatie* between two persons, *Legatus* and *Ligatus*, a typically Schilderian wordplay. *Ligatus* means ‘the bound one’ and refers to those who are still bound by unlawful synodical decisions, while *Legatus* means ‘him who is sent’ and refers to those who are sent to ‘liberate’ themselves from the synod: “In our crisis of 1944 the *critical* point was: *moral loyalty* to the church order; confessional binding had to be distinguished from extra-scriptural inventions”, so Schilder observed in a 1948 lecture.⁴⁶

Schilder’s sole concern for the legal aspect of the schism surfaced also in connection with the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*. Schilder had always argued for unity with the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* and denounced their refusal to unite with the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. In 1949 one of the local *Gereformeerde Kerken* (*vrijgemaakt*) had an internal disagreement over the relationship to the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*. Some in that church were of the opinion that those who had liberated themselves from the *Gereformeerde Kerken* should become members of the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*, instead of starting a new church. While we might expect Schilder to be sympathetic to such suggestions for his emphases on church unity on the basis of a shared confession, he firmly disagreed. His main argument was that such a movement would cover the serious nature of the events that had taken place in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. The schism had to be felt. This reasoning, again, proceeds from the institutional reality of the church as its point of departure. That institution had made a grave mistake, and it had to deal with the consequences *as an institution*. The ‘new’ institution could then initiate ecumenical conversation towards unity with the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*. The church is an institution, an objective legal reality. Schilder was also convinced that as many people as possible were to leave the ‘synodocratic’ churches, since they were bound by an unlawful synod. Schilder considered the *Gereformeerde Kerken* (*vrijgemaakt*) to be the true continuation of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. If the members simply moved to the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*, that reality would be denied.⁴⁷

⁴⁶“In onze crisis van 1944 was het *kritieke* punt *zedelijk trouw* aan de kerkorde; de confessionele binding was te onderscheiden van bovenschriftuurlijke vondsten.” (Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 241).

⁴⁷Schilder, *VWKerk III*, pp. 300-307.

5.2.2 True Church

Previously I noted that Schilder always eschewed applying the notion of the true church to a particular church, preferring that of the lawful church (section 4.2.5). The true church is an important notion, but it seemed for Schilder more a ‘tendency’ than a matter of a concrete institution. What happened to this notion of the true church after the schism? This question is especially poignant since the *vrijgemaakt* were ridiculed for their supposed self-designation as the one true church. The Free University philosopher, S.U. Zuidema, for example, voiced that complaint about the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* in 1950.⁴⁸ Did Schilder affirm that the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* were the true church? Was his thought altered by the schism?

Once again, it is difficult to pin Schilder down on what he means by ‘the true church’. On the one hand he criticizes his opponents when they try to abstract this element of the confession by applying it to the invisible church. In this period, Schilder also critically engages a theologian from the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, Frits Von Meyenfeldt (1919-2000), who proposed to read the confession on the point of the true and false church as a norm, not a reality. Schilder could not see anything in this but a new version of the pluriformity that abandons the pursuit for concrete, visible unity. He therefore denounces Von Meyenfeldt’s inclination to speak of *a* true church rather than *the* true church.⁴⁹ Conversely, Schilder responds furiously when the aforementioned Zuidema (1906-1975) attacked a book by the *vrijgemaakte* politician A. Zijlstra (1874-1964) on Christian politics. As noted, Zuidema ridiculed the idea that the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* would be the only true church in the Netherlands that is deserving of special protection by the government according to article 36 of the Belgic Confession. Schilder replies that Zuidema has failed to understand Zijlstra and completely misses the point. He reiterates the dynamic aspect of the church: The church is always *in fieri*, unfinished, becoming the church. Then he adds: “All believers from all over the earth and from all ages together constitute the church with Christ as its Head”⁵⁰ Article 36 means that “every local church should be protected by the government.”⁵¹

Nonetheless, one can still discern Schilder now applying the labels of true and false church more readily than before, prior to the schism. Schilder repeatedly calls the *Gereformeerde Kerken* a false church, and also, on at least one occasion, affirms that the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* are now the true

⁴⁸Zuidema bij Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 385.

⁴⁹Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 458.

⁵⁰“Alle gelovigen met elkander over heel de aarde en uit alle eeuwen vormen tezamen de kerk met Christus als haar Hoofd” Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 385

⁵¹Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 385.

church. In discussing the views of the *vrijgemaakte* minister Berend Bos (1901-1977), he notes: “Rev. Bos is attempting, along with me, to locate the true church in the actual situation. He says, and I am grateful for this, that the true church in the Netherlands is located where Prof. Greijdanus and candidate Schilder and Rev. Van Dijk, and Rev. Bos, etc., are allowed to preach, baptize, and administer the Lord’s Supper.”⁵² In the same article, Schilder writes: “They [the *Gereformeerde Kerken*] will *become* true again, if they convert to being loyal to the *agreement* that the church has made: article 31”.⁵³ This is, however, the only instance where I have found Schilder saying this, and even then he does so indirectly there. It is clear what Schilder believes, but it looks as if he is still reluctant simply to claim the label of ‘true church’ as his own. On this issue Schilder also clashed with his students and some of his colleagues occasioned by a student from the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* at the Kampen Seminary in 1946. Schilder recommended that this student be admitted to the student body, since he stood on the basis of the same confession. Others wanted to draw a clearer line, arguing that confessional and ecclesial unity cannot be separated, and insisting that there can be only one true church (see note 65 below). That Schilder’s emphasis with respect to the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* was different from his emphasis in regard to the *Gereformeerde Kerken* is no coincidence. Schilder was and remained reluctant to apply the label of the true church to any particular church, even though it does seem to be the logical consequence of his thought. The trauma of the schism did mean that he was more ready to embrace this conclusion with regard to the *Gereformeerde Kerken* and, by consequence, the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*. However, he still maintained his hesitance, especially with regard to the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*.⁵⁴

Even though my focus is on the theological arguments for the schism, it would be a mistake to overlook the personal aspects of Schilder’s relentless defence of it.⁵⁵ In many instances, Schilder explicitly makes reference to the personal grief the ‘synodocratic churches’ have inflicted upon him. And there is not only a sense of grief, but even worse, also a sense of having been treated unjustly. By suspending him, they had hit him where he was most vulnerable.

⁵²“...dan is ds. Bos thans met mij bezig de ware kerk heus te adresseren in de huidige situatie. Hij zegt, en laat ons daarvoor danken: de ware kerk in Nederland is thans te adresseren daar, waar men prof. Greijdanus heeft laten preken en dopen en avondmaal houden, en cand. Schilder en ds. Van Dijk, en ds. Bos, enzovoort.” (Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 233).

⁵³“Ze worden weer de ware, als ze zich officieel bekeren tot de trouw aan de *afpraak*, die voor het kerkverband is aangegeaan: art. 31” (Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 235).

⁵⁴See also what Schilder writes in “Naschrift der redactie” in: *De Reformatie* 22-46, p. 366 (August 16, 1947) about cooperation with ‘synodocrats’ and *hervormden*: *Hervormden* know what is bad in their church, the ‘synodocrats’ do not.

⁵⁵See what I wrote in section 3.3.2 about Schilder and community.

The decades before, Schilder was never tired of stressing the importance of what happened in the church. The church is the focal point of the Christian life. That is where one stands before the throne of God. The fact that Schilder was removed from the pulpit, from his ecclesial office, was the worst thing anyone could have done to him. It is this fact, that the synod had expelled Greijdanus and him from the pulpit, that Schilder mentions repeatedly.⁵⁶ Schilder was deeply hurt following the suspension in 1944. His friends and students always paint the picture of a friendly and honest, but also serious and heavy-hearted, person (see what I wrote in section 2.1.3). This description fits Schilder's behavior during and after the schism. He was treated, in his view, with dishonesty and injustice, and that within the very realm of the church.⁵⁷ This also explains, at least in part, the so-called 'ethical conflict' Schilder saw surging after the schism, to which we will turn in the next section. Underneath the ecclesial-political errors there resides an ethical conflict: The people who are on the other side of the schism are no longer to be trusted due to the stance they had taken in that ecclesial conflict. This made it very difficult for Schilder to cooperate with those same people in other matters. This conflict had, of course, theological reasons. The deep personal grief Schilder had experienced should, however, not be overlooked.⁵⁸ He simply could not wrap his mind around the fact that these people could deny him cooperation in the church, which was the essential place of the Christian life, and then in other organizations continue as if nothing has happened. For him it felt like a marriage where one's spouse commits adultery, but wants to continue life together as if nothing has happened.⁵⁹

In chapter 4 (section 4.2.5), I promised a slight shift, but for the most part a remaining tension, in Schilder's thought on the true and lawful church. That is indeed the picture that emerges from this period. The churches' lawful character becomes the dominant trait, as a consequence of the schism. With regard to the true church, Schilder comes closer to applying that notion to the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* as far as the Netherlands is concerned. The context of the separated church after the schism has pushed Schilder towards a closer affirmation of the true church's concrete address. He remains reluctant in this regard, however, as he does with the dynamic nature of the true church, as we will see in the next section.

⁵⁶Schilder, *VW44-45*, pp. 92, 207, 473.

⁵⁷For references, see section 5.3.2 below.

⁵⁸See also G. Glas. "Mentaliteit: een korte peiling". In: *1944 en vervolgens*. Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 1994, pp. 52–57, pp. 53–57, who makes similar observations about the "mentality" of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*.

⁵⁹See Schilder's church-marriage comparison in Schilder, *Dictaat de kerk*, p. 79.

5.2.3 The Dynamic of the True Church

The situation after the schism elicited struggles for Schilder with ecclesial absolutism. On the one hand, he remained committed to his earlier emphasis on the concrete, visible institution. It was this emphasis that was at the heart of the very schism itself. Over against the old *Gereformeerde Kerken*, Schilder firmly claimed that the only lawful continuation was the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*. On the other hand, Schilder clearly sought to steer clear of ecclesial absolutism, as he had always tried to do with his emphasis on the church's dynamic aspect. As the unofficial leader of the newly formed churches, Schilder increasingly saw the danger of ecclesial absolutism within his churches. Without explicitly avowing it, Schilder seems to understand that the criticisms voiced by Zuidema and Von Meyenfeldt are not entirely beside the point.

There were two big controversies within the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* in its first decades, namely the relation to the *Gereformeerde Kerken* and the related question of the 'ongoing reformation'.⁶⁰ The 'ongoing reformation' was the quest of a part of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* to draw out the consequences of the ecclesial schism for such Christian organizations as schools, political party, etc. This movement had its roots in the Reformational Movement in the 1930s, although its emphases were different. There was a strong faction in the newly formed churches that emphasized the formation of separate *vrijgemaakt* organizations, and also rejected any possibility of conversation with the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. The sole condition for unity was the immediate withdrawal of the doctrinal decisions of 1944.⁶¹ On this last issue, Schilder sided with this faction, as he too had placed all emphasis on legal aspects of the schism. Others, however, were more open to all kinds of attempts at reconciliation, including informal conversations. In 1948 a number of people even returned to the 'synodical' churches following an initiative from Rev. Berend Bos to start reconciliatory conversations.⁶² Although Schilder appears to express no remorse at the exit Bos and his followers made from the churches, four years later he does write: "Even though I myself believe that the sole lawful celebration of the Lord's Supper in town X takes place in this specific church in X, I would never dare say that whoever does not agree with me on this will not be allowed to celebrate the Lord's Supper this coming Sunday."⁶³

⁶⁰"Already in an early stadium it became clear that the ideas of the true church and the ongoing reformation could become a divisive issue", Van Langevelde writes about the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* in 1946 (Langevelde, *In het klimaat van het absolute*, p. 331). See also Kuiper, "Vrijmaking of wederkeer", pp. 28-34.

⁶¹D. Deddens and M. te Velde, eds. *Vrijmaking - Wederkeer : vijftig jaar vrijmaking in beeld gebracht, 1944-1994*. Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 1994, pp. 117-127.

⁶²Harinck and Berkelaar, *Domineesfabriek*, pp. 216-219.

⁶³"Al geloof ik zelf, dat de enige wettige avondmaalstafel in X, staat in het kerkgebouw, te

On the matter of the ongoing reformation, Schilder's position was more nuanced.⁶⁴ Of note in this regard is the letter that three of Schilder's students, Kees Trimp (1926-2012), Jaap Kamphuis (1921-2011), and Chris Breen (1924-2014), two of whom would later become professors at the Kampen Seminary in their own right, wrote to him in *De Reformatie*. They raised the issue of cooperation with people of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* and confronted Schilder with his own position. Since there is only one true church, the three argued, how can a political party be associated with a false church? What you taught us about the one true institution of the church and its relation to the kingdom implies a separate political party, so these students remind their teacher.⁶⁵ Fully in line with his principle concerning open discussion, Schilder prints the letter in *De Reformatie*. Schilder's students exposed a tension in his ecclesiology that we noted before between his 'objective' church on the one hand and his 'dynamic' church on the other hand. In his reply, Schilder struggles to deal with this tension. He introduces a distinction between cold, necessary cooperation and warm, cordial cooperation. The former is almost always possible, the latter is not. Yet with the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, cooperation in a warm and cordial way has by now become impossible: "With people who have dealt with the church as in 1944 we cannot pray; we can pray for them, but not with them."⁶⁶ Concretely, Schilder thought that study fellowships, Bible study clubs, and sometimes even schools could be established from one church. When it comes to a political party, however, Schilder clearly thought this to be a bizarre idea: "Of course, we too understand that a political party will never be gathered from a single church institution, and that a church institution will never give its support to only one political party", Schilder had written two months earlier.⁶⁷

X. bedoeld, ik zou nooit durven zeggen: wie het daarmee niet eens is, die mag geen avondmaal vieren a.s. zondag" (Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 488).

⁶⁴I will discuss his views in greater detail in the next section on the public church (section 5.3.2).

⁶⁵ "Stemmen uit onze kerken" in: *De Reformatie* 23-38, p. 321 (June 19, 1948). This disagreement was no isolated incident, as we saw above (section 5.2.2). As early as 1946, Schilder found himself confronted by one of the authors, Jaap Kamphuis, who, against Schilder's advice, had denied a student from the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* membership in the Kampen student association. On this occasion Schilder pointed to the confession as the basis on which this student could indeed be accepted (Harinck and Berkelaar, *Domineesfabriek*, pp. 207-210).

⁶⁶"Met mensen, die zóó met de kerk omgesprongen hebben als in 1944 gebeurd is, kan men niet bidden; wel vóór hen, niet met hen." ("Stemmen uit onze kerken" in: *De Reformatie* 23-38, p. 321 (June 19, 1948)). In the 1960s, when Jaap Kamphuis had become professor at the Kampen Seminary and made a selection of Schilder's journalistic work for the collected works on the church, he chose to exclude both this letter and Schilder's response. Schilder, *VWKerk III* Was the disagreement with the late father of the *Vrijmaking* too controversial in the context of the ecclesial conflicts of the 1960s? See section 5.2.4.

⁶⁷"Want wij weten het natuurlijk óók wel, dat geen enkele politieke partij ooit uit één

Schilder's answer to his students is telling for the reason that it is so uncharacteristic of him. Unlike other instances, his argument is now based on a realist attitude.⁶⁸ In the vast majority of his writings, Schilder seems by way of principle uninterested in realism, always accusing Kuiper of weakening his theology with empirical observations. Schilder always emphasized the norm, the ideal, the viewpoint "from faith". Now he asks his students: are you serious? Please look at the facts. What you propose is never going to work! Furthermore, Schilder introduces a distinction (cold and warm cooperation) to make a principle (church and kingdom are inseparable) work in practice, a move he often denounced in Kuiper. Schilder thus struggles with the consequences of his own ideas. It is an old enemy that Schilder is fighting, namely that of the narrow, mystical, sectarian church. Ironically, the old foe now appears in the garment of his own ideas.

It is not until 1951 that Schilder becomes more outspoken in his criticism of the more radical factions of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*. Was it because his former friend and colleague Vollenhoven, who had not followed Schilder in the *Vrijmaking*, reproached him for not working to stop the radical factions in the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* which, in Vollenhoven's view, were only widening the gulf? In 1950 Vollenhoven wrote to Schilder: "But you do not call them to a forceful stop. And yet you are the only one among the *vrijgemaakten* who could do this with good result."⁶⁹ A couple of months later, Schilder begins to blow the dust off his older convictions of a broad church where polemic and debate is a sign of a healthy and dynamic church. Were his eyes opened by Vollenhoven's melancholic remark about *De Reformatie* in the 1930s: "Every week I miss something like *De Reformatie* was from 1934 - 1940"?⁷⁰ In April 1951 Schilder returns to his familiar role as gadfly and decries the use others in the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* are making of the distinction between being "properly *vrijgemaakt*" and not.⁷¹ Those currents, which followed in the line of Schilder's students, advocated a stricter

kerkinstituut zal gerecruteerd zijn, alsmede, dat geen enkel kerkinstituut aan één politieke partij steun zal verleen." ("De bedoeling van het Amersfoortsche congres" in: *De Reformatie* 23-29, p. 239 (April 17, 1948)). Schilder overlooked the Catholic People's Party. See also Douma, Trimp, and Veling, *K. Schilder*, p. 223.

⁶⁸In this small polemic we find our thesis on Schilder's view on a mixed culture confirmed (see section 4.3.2); see more on this topic below (section 5.3.2).

⁶⁹"Maar je roept hun geen krachtig halt toe. En toch ben jij vrijwel de eenige in de kring der vrijgemaakten die dit met resultaat zoudt kunnen." D. H. T. Vollenhoven to K. Schilder, November 14, 1950 in: K. Schilder and D. H. T. Vollenhoven. *Eender en anders: correspondentie tussen K. Schilder en D. H. Th. Vollenhoven*. Ed. by W. G. de Vries and H. Vollenhoven. Kampen: Kok, 1992, p. 171.

⁷⁰"nog elke week mis 'k iets als de Reformatie na '34-'40 was." D. H. T. Vollenhoven to K. Schilder, November 14, 1950 in: Schilder and Vollenhoven, *Eender En Anders*, p. 171.

⁷¹"Goed vrijgemaakt" in: *De Reformatie* 26-22, p. 187 (March 3, 1951) and "Goed

understanding of what it means to be *vrijgemaakt*, especially in the debates over the ‘ongoing reformation’. Those who criticized the newly formed organizations that allowed only members of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* in its ranks, were deemed “not properly *vrijgemaakt*”. Schilder opposed this narrow qualification by saying that being properly ‘liberated’ means nothing else than what it meant to be ‘properly Reformed’ before 1944. The *Vrijmaking* was only about the synodical decisions, and nothing else, Schilder repeated. The church is never a group of likeminded spirits, so Schilder writes as he echoes his criticism on the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Hersteld Verband* after the synod of Assen (see section 3.3.2).⁷² Being properly *vrijgemaakt* implies “the will to live together in one church with every possible weirdo (beginning with yourself).”⁷³ Thus, very concretely, Schilder concludes: Those who want to establish a new political party bound to the church, and those who want to stay in the old Antirevolutionary party, should not condemn each other.⁷⁴

Several months later, Schilder advances another element from his earlier view to counter his fellow churchmen. It is the confession that is the defining characteristic of the church, not the personal views of its members. The church is a matter of faith, just like all the articles of faith: “It ought never to be our fault when someone who believes in God no longer is able to celebrate the Lord’s Supper at our table [...] I fear that this is something we sometimes forget.”⁷⁵ Heresies are found everywhere, Schilder continues, and if you give me a random church weekly, a copy of *De Heraut* or *De Reformatie* including a copy with my own articles, I will find you a heresy. Heresies are everywhere, “but I like to have them next to me in the church”. We should fight to “keep together whoever wants to stand on the same foundation. But if you then say that they are not standing on that basis, I will ask: But are you [standing there]? I do like fighters, but I do not like fanatics.”⁷⁶ In his 1951 *Schooldag* public lecture, this matter

vrijgemaakt” in: *De Reformatie* 26-29, p. 242 (April 21, 1951). At this point it should once more be noted that Kamphuis failed to include these articles, as well as all the articles I will be quoting in this section, in the Schilder writings he selected for publication. The relevance of these omitted articles for the topic of the church is, in my view, beyond question. Of course, Kamphuis could not include every article, and he did include one article that is in line with the articles I will be quoting here (Schilder, *VWKerk III*, pp. 486-492). Nonetheless, one wonders again whether the ecclesial politics that surely were on Kamphuis’s mind during these years influenced his selection. See Harinck and Berkelaar, *Domineesfabriek*, pp. 281-311, for a sketch of those ecclesial politics.

⁷²See chart (A.1) and glossary.

⁷³“dat je met alle rare snuiters (te beginnen met jezelf) wilt samenleven in één kerkverband” (“Goed vrijgemaakt” in: *De Reformatie* 26-29, p. 242 (April 21, 1951)).

⁷⁴For the Antirevolutionary party, see the glossary.

⁷⁵“Het mag onze schuld niet zijn, als een ander, die in God gelooft, bij ons geen avondmaal vieren kan [...] Ik ben bang dat we dit wel eens vergeten.” (“Wees ‘anti’, maar niet ‘een anti’...en helemaal niet ‘een contra’” in: *De Reformatie* 26-35, p. 291 (June 2, 1951)).

⁷⁶“Maar ik heb ze graag naast me in de kerk.”, “het bijeenhouden van wat op een basis staan

once again appears as the central theme. Zeal is a virtue, Schilder argues, but a zealot is dangerous. He applied this explicitly to the matter of the 'ongoing reformation', and urged his listeners: "If you claim to be the true church and to possess the truth, how dare you chase into the desert those poor souls who cannot agree with you in everything?"⁷⁷ The true church is after all an incentive and not an asset.

Especially after a couple of years, Schilder began to return increasingly to his older emphases on the dynamic aspects of the church and to the accompanying role of a polemical gadfly. The *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* may well by their own confession be the one lawful church in the Netherlands, but this does not mean that the institution can become complacent or sectarian in the sense that people are kept on the outside on bases other than the confession: "The *house of God*. Do you not tremble as you hear *these words*? *You, you* are the primary target of God's lightning wrath", Schilder had preached in 1918 (section 2.2.4). Schilder's critical ecclesiology was back on the table.

5.2.4 The Tension After Schilder's Death

Although formally beyond the scope of this study, it is worth spending a brief moment on the history of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* in the decades following Schilder's death. Since this chapter intends to look at how the house of Schilder's thought is inhabited, a small step beyond the span of his life can be justified. This is all the more so, because the tensions in Schilder's thought between the true church and the dynamic church will lead to a new schism in 1967.

In the years after Schilder's death, the disagreement between the different factions over the two controversies within the churches only deepened. Schilder's journal was increasingly dominated by the advocates of the 'Ongoing Reformation', the very factions Schilder had tried to temper. In 1956 the increasing distance materialized in a division within the editorial board of *De Reformatie*. That year, the students who had written Schilder that critical letter in 1948 became the new editors. They replaced C. Veenhof, also a close friend of Schilder's, and H.J. Jager. A year later, they founded a new ecclesial journal, *Opbouw*.⁷⁸ This split among the church's leaders was a herald of the schism that was to take place within the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* in 1967, when Veenhof and

wil. En als men zegt: ja maar, ze staan daar niet helemaal op, dan vraag ik: u dan wel? Ik houd van vechters maar niet van drijvers." ("Wees 'anti', maar niet 'een anti'...en helemaal niet 'een contra'" in: *De Reformatie* 26-35, p. 291 (June 2, 1951)).

⁷⁷"Zelus en Zeloten" in: *De Reformatie* 27-1, p. 1 (October 6, 1951). See also what Schilder writes around that same time about the perfect zeal of God and the sinful zealotry of people which "destroys churches" (Schilder, *HC IV*, pp. 143-145).

⁷⁸Langevelde, *In het klimaat van het absolute*, pp. 383-390, 411.

Jager were sidetracked and many ministers suspended and eventually ousted. These men gradually formed a new denomination numbering more than 25 percent of what the church had been before this new schism.⁷⁹ The history of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* thus witnesses unmistakable ironies. The churches that had come into existence following their opposition to a synod that bound its pastors to new doctrinal formulations, now made this rejection into a new binding statement and even enforced it by expelling those who refused to conform.⁸⁰ Of course, this does not do justice to the fact that it was the binding character of the confession that was, in the eyes of many, at stake. As we have seen repeatedly, this aspect of the confession lay at the very heart of Schilder's ecclesiology.

Many factors played a role in the 1967 schism, whose analysis is beyond the scope of this work. It is significant to note, however, that it was an unresolved tension in Schilder's ecclesiology that played an important role in the separation. Together with Schilder, Kamphuis emphasized that the church should maintain its 'objective character' by means of its confessional character. Only a church with a clear confession is the church of Christ. And only a confessional church can be the true hub of Christian culture. This serves to explain the 'ongoing reformation': organizations uniquely bound to the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*. Kamphuis applied Schilder's thought with an absolute consistency, a route Schilder himself had been reluctant to take. Veenhof and others emphasized how Schilder had always argued for the breadth of the church, where different opinions and polemics were part of the dynamic of becoming the church. They also referred to Schilder's apology for the 1944 schism: A church should never bind its members to what is not according to God's Word. These things suggest, however, that there is a significant tension here in Schilder's thought on the church. As such, inhabiting the house of Schilder's thought proved difficult.⁸¹

5.2.5 The *Præsentia Salutis*

It is tempting to see the period following the 1944 schism as a radicalization of Schilder's thought, explained by the traumatic experience he had suffered. Especially the relentless emphasis on the legal aspects of the schism is alienating, and differs from what Schilder advanced in other contexts. And indeed, Schilder's traumatic experiences certainly have explanatory force and need to be taken

⁷⁹Langevelde, *In het klimaat van het absolute*, pp. 509-522.

⁸⁰Jager and Veenhof justified their position by noting the same irony in 1969 (Harinck and Berkelaar, *Domineesfabriek*, p. 333).

⁸¹Langevelde, *In het klimaat van het absolute*, pp. 446-447, 477 and Kuiper, "Vrijmaking of wederkeer", pp. 34-39.

into account. However, the stance he adopted during the schism, together with his emphasis on the juridical aspects of the church, are an expression of what I have earlier called the *praesentia salutis* as the core motif of Schilder's theology. How the *praesentia salutis* and the legal church are connected is made explicit by Schilder in the revised edition of his 1930 *Christ in His Suffering*. According to the introduction to the first revised volume, Schilder worked on that volume while he was in hiding during the Second World War. Volumes one and two were published in 1949 and 1951, respectively.⁸² As with all Schilder's postwar revised editions, these volumes grew considerably in size, adding sentences and entire paragraphs to the older text. In comparing the two editions, several meditations found at the beginning of the revised second volume stand out for the changes Schilder has made in them. In chapter three, for example, Schilder treats Christ's trial before the high priest in John 18.⁸³ In the first edition, the word 'church' does not figure even once.⁸⁴ In the second edition, however, the word appears more than sixty times. In the revised edition, Schilder has reframed the entire narrative of Christ's lawsuit as an ecclesial lawsuit: "The church persecutes those who speak holy words", Schilder adds after relating the high priest's verdict.⁸⁵ The Sanhedrin has become an ecclesial court, and the law church polity.⁸⁶ The way the Sanhedrin operates is "characteristic behavior of the false church: ignoring scriptural evidence and asking about influence and doctrine."⁸⁷ And if the parallel with Schilder's recent experience was not clear enough, he adds: "The ecclesial judge sidesteps the law (i.e., the church order), and God notes that the schismatic is Levi [represented by the high priest], and not Melchisedek [represented by Jesus]. For that is what it means to be a schismatic: filing a lawsuit while sidestepping the church order."⁸⁸

In chapter 3, we saw Schilder putting the church on one line with Moses, Isaiah, and Paul. The church is salvation history today. The same concrete connection between God and everyday life we witnessed in the life of Jesus is what we see today in the church. This is not to deny the unicity of the work

⁸²K. Schilder. *Christus in zijn lijden: overwegingen van het lijdensevangelie I: Christus aan den ingang van zijn lijden*. 2nd ed. Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1949 and K. Schilder. *Christus in zijn lijden: overwegingen van het lijdensevangelie II: Christus in den doorgang van zijn lijden*. 2nd ed. Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1951.

⁸³Schilder, *Christus in zijn lijden II*², pp. 42-74.

⁸⁴Schilder, *Christus in zijn lijden II*¹, pp. 32-59.

⁸⁵Schilder, *Christus in zijn lijden II*², p. 42.

⁸⁶Schilder, *Christus in zijn lijden II*¹, pp. 36-37 and Schilder, *Christus in zijn lijden II*², pp. 46-47.

⁸⁷Schilder, *Christus in zijn lijden II*², p. 50.

⁸⁸"De kerkelijke rechtsbedienaar zet de lex, de kerkenorde op zij, en God noteert, dat Levi de scheurmaker is, niet Melchizedek. Want dat is scheurmaker-zijn: een proces voeren met terzijdestelling van de kerkenordening." (Schilder, *Christus in zijn lijden II*², pp. 48-49).

of Jesus Christ, as Schilder is the first to affirm. The incarnation, however, happened in the same history we live in today. The scandalous nature of the way God connects himself with earthly matters is still experienced today in the church, whose binding on earth extends into heaven.⁸⁹ It is along those lines that Schilder can read the history of the schism in the history of Christ's suffering.⁹⁰ Here again, it becomes clear how Schilder's fierce opposition to Barth's perceived disconnection of time and eternity is closely associated with the actions he undertook in the ecclesial schism. The concrete deeds of the church reverberate in heaven. The church is as serious a matter as the trial of Jesus Christ. Not unlike the African Americans sang "Let my people go" and applied the gospel to their concrete situation, so Schilder referred to the exodus from Egypt as "the *vrijmaking* of the church."⁹¹ Jesus is Israel's "*vrijmaker*", Schilder writes in the revised meditation.⁹² That was how Schilder and many others understood the '*vrijmaking*', as an act of gracious liberation by God himself. Psalm 124 would become the *vrijmakingspsalm* and was sung with high spirits on many occasions:

God rescued us from teeth that rip and tear
Praise him who broke the fowler's deadly snare.
We have escaped, are free now like a bird.
Our help comes from the LORD who hears our prayer,
from him who shaped creation by his word.⁹³

5.2.6 In Sum

After the schism, Schilder's 'deep' emphasis on the distinct character of the church continues to be at the heart of his oeuvre. The schism itself and Schilder's subsequent apology reveal how much the legal, institutional church was a matter of great concern for him. Even during one of the tensest periods of the German occupation of the Netherlands, Schilder refused to ignore the path of error that the institution of his church had embarked on. Schilder's emphasis on the

⁸⁹See Schilder, *VWSchrift III*, pp. 59-63, where Schilder treats this quote from Matthew 16:19 and applies it to the 1944 schism in a similar fashion.

⁹⁰See also Schilder's letter to the board of the Kampen Seminary, days after his suspension in April 1944. Schilder writes on Good Friday, and ends the letter where he speaks about his suspension with the following: "Today is Good Friday." (Schilder, *VW42-44*, p. 199) The board got the message, and showed itself astounded at the fact that "you dare to compare yourself in this affair with our blessed Savior, and the synod with the Sanhedrin." (Schilder, *VW42-44*, p. 232).

⁹¹Schilder, *VWSchrift III*, p. 167.

⁹²Schilder, *Christus in zijn lijden II*², p. 179.

⁹³"Wij zijn ontsnapt als vogels aan het net, // de strik door vogelvangers uitgezet. // De strik brak los, zo zijn wij vrij geraakt. // In 's HEREN naam is onze hulp, Hij redt, // de HEER, die aard' en hemel heeft gemaakt." Psalm 124:3 in the Dutch Genevan psalter.

church as a legal reality is in line with his earlier ideas on the church. His concern is for the church as the historical institution, marked by its confession, its legal documents. It is not the individuals in the church or any other subjective matter that decides what is the church; it is the institution that openly confesses its faith in Christ and gathers the believers that is the true, lawful church. In his earlier work, church polity had never shown itself a very important issue for Schilder, but its rise to prominence in his oeuvre can indeed be explained by the earlier emphases already present in his thought. Which institution is the lawful church in a certain place decides where the true church is and where God's covenant is administered. There, and only there, does God formally meet his people. This explains why Schilder could never relativize the decisions of the synod. They were legal decisions made in church *coram Deo*, and thus a matter of utmost gravity. Like he said in the Diemer-polemic in 1929: It is a terrible thing to have two churches gathering on Sunday who pray against each other. Schilder's role in the schism finds its theological background in his emphasis on the church as primarily a juridical reality. The church is not in the first place a community of believers or regenerated people, but a legal reality. Nonetheless, the context of the schism narrowed Schilder's thought down to the church as a legal reality, creating a caricature of Schilder's view as he himself came to realize.

The genesis of this caricature, or perhaps radicalization, of his emphasis on the lawful institution is also to be found in what we earlier called 'the tension of the Sermon of the Mount'. Dating back to Schilder's youth, where traces of it can be found, Schilder always emphasized that the church, being the place *coram Deo* par excellence, was by definition marked by a strong tension: the tension between God's commands and human activity. In the wake of the First World War, the apocalyptic climate enhanced this experience: The impending judgment did not alleviate the tension. We saw how this tension came to occupy a central motif in his theology: the covenant. The fiery plate that keeps the bear dancing became the center of the Christian religion. As I will explain in greater detail below, the Second World War brought Schilder's slumbering apocalyptic inclination back to prominence. People have often wondered how this schism could have occurred in the war. The fact of the matter is that the converse is true: The tension of the war created the very conditions for the schism to occur. All these factors, combined with Schilder's personality, make the schism and Schilder's response understandable.

This radicalization on the point of the institution of the church, however, did not keep Schilder from realizing the pitfalls and putting his earlier emphasis on the church's breadth back on the table. His 1951 address on zealotry clearly resonates with the 1932 article on the Church at a Dead End, as we have discussed it above. It is the context that has dramatically changed. At the

time, Schilder was a gadfly in a very broad church, where he was part of the polemics. His opponents in 1932 were the pietistic circles of his church that were withdrawing in the domain of the church and, in line with that, separating the spheres of the church from the other spheres. Now, however, Schilder had to learn to see that the sectarian temptation was coming in the garment of his own theological emphases, which had created a church that was active in the world and exempt from pietistic mysticism, but tolerated only one opinion. Schilder had to fight the results of the imbalance flowing from a tension in his own thought. In the development experienced by Schilder's churches following his death, this tension between catholicity and purity, between the dynamic and the institutional element of the church, was at least partially responsible for the schism that was to take place in 1967. When the house of Schilder's thought came to be inhabited, the degree to which both elements were essential, and yet very difficult to maintain together, became clear to him. Schilder wanted a church that was faithful to Christ in both confessional purity and catholic breadth. In his thought, both were present and balanced; In practice, however, this proved a tension difficult to live.

5.3 Public Church

We have now seen how the tension in Schilder's view on the distinct nature of the church developed in the new context of the church after the schism. When the house of Schilder's thought was inhabited, existing tensions were exposed. Something similar happens with Schilder's view on the public character of the church. In the previous chapter we closed the discussion by observing a lack of concrete applications of Schilder's idea. We also noted a tension between Schilder's narrow understanding of the church as an institution that gathers on Sunday, and the conception of the church as God's new humanity in a broader sense. The debates in the young *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* will also expose the problems of this tension.

5.3.1 The Mandate of the Small Remnant

Above I showed how Schilder speaks of the church as an insignificant, diminished minority in an apocalyptic context. In the 1920s he used language similar to what we saw in section 2.2.4. Then, however, it could be seen as either defeatist prophecy or mere rhetoric, given that the church was not a small minority but a blooming and influential component of Dutch society (about 8%). After the schism and the war, the situation changed considerably. In 1950 the reality of Schilder's church was closer to the way he had depicted it: There were now 90,000 members in the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*, less than 1% of the

total Dutch population of 10 million people. I also noted how Schilder hinted at a more humble cultural program and an apocalyptic time where cultural criticism will prevail over cultural engagement. What happens to Schilder's great ideal of a church that is the heart of world history, the true 'assembly' where God continues his cosmic work begun in Adam?

Unsurprisingly, Schilder's ideal of a church with cosmic relevance remains firmly in place. He had opposed the isolation of the church from the life of the world; the church should not be in the slum, but is rather the only 'assembly' in the world that is also 'congregation'. In this line, Schilder had criticized the way the notion of sphere sovereignty was being used to isolate the church from the practices of everyday life. This is what Schilder keeps emphasizing throughout the years following the *Vrijmaking*, no matter how small the church was. Schilder, like his fellow churchmen, experienced the ecclesial *Vrijmaking* and the liberation from Nazi Germany as more than a historical coincidence: this was God's providential care for his church. Schilder's address at the Kampen Seminary in the summer of 1947 was entitled: "The church after two liberations".⁹⁴ He concludes the lecture with the words: "Do not tear apart the political and the ecclesial. The sweeping of the nation is as a divine act of preparation of the shop floor, where the church can then give birth through the Word and send out into the fullness of life."⁹⁵ God had at once liberated his people from oppression by the Germans and from oppression by the hierarchical synod.

Not only does Schilder continue a line from his earlier work, he places even stronger emphasis on the public role of the church. Numerous passages could be cited in support. Striking is the meditation he published in the summer of 1945, soon after the war had ended. In a time where a strong need was felt in Dutch society for retribution on German collaborators, Schilder made the claim that treason in the church is the same as treason in the nation. "A church that devalues its words [...] is a disaster for the nation. [...] The church should be a blessing for the nation, as salting salt and a shining light."⁹⁶ In July 1945 Schilder gave a lecture on the antithesis, which is an implicit polemic with the *Doorbraak*. He argued there that the principles of Christianity that are nurtured in the church are the only hope for the *wederopbouw* (reconstruction) of the Netherlands after the war:

⁹⁴Schilder, *VWKerk III*, pp. 205-217. See, similarly, Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 178.

⁹⁵"Rukt ze niet uiteen: politiek de ene, kerkelijk de andere. Want het schoonvegen van de nationale erve is als goddelijke acte de voorbereiding van de werkvloeren waarop de kerk kan baren door het Woord, en kan uitzenden tot het volle leven." Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 216.

⁹⁶"Als de kerk haar woorden devalueert [...] dan wordt zij een ramp voor de natie. [...] Die kerk in het volk, in de natie, moet voor de natie ten zege zijn als zoutend zout en als lichtend licht." (Schilder, *VWSchrijft III*, p. 19).

“The church, freed from human bonds that are not according to God’s Word; the church, your mother, who gave birth to you through Word and strengthens you through Word and sacrament – may that church chase you out into the streets, the army, school, above or below the ground; may she chase you to the labor for the kingdom of heaven.”⁹⁷

The small *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* still had a mandate for the nation. The smaller the church, the more Schilder emphasized the necessity of its engagement with the world. “It is very important to remain the ‘Big Church’, even if we meet in a gym”, Schilder writes later that year.⁹⁸

Thus, Schilder emphatically advances the line from his own thought that the church is by definition relevant to the world. Church history is world history. The fact that the church he now belonged to barely had any relevance to the world only seems to make this emphasis stronger. In previous chapters, I have suggested two elements in Schilder’s concrete application of his view on a public church. The first is that culture basically comes down to ‘daily life’, with Schilder having no programs or aspirations for rechristianization. The second is that Schilder has no understanding of a separate, isolated Christian culture. Especially on the second question we will have to listen carefully, since such isolation was what the ‘ongoing reformation’-faction within the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* indeed pursued. Did Schilder stick to his views?

5.3.2 Church and Organization

The Debate on Organizations Above I mentioned the debate on the ‘ongoing reformation’, which concerned the question whether or not members of the newly formed churches could continue to cooperate with the organizations in which they used to be active. Over the course of the twentieth century, the Kuyprian churches had set up an impressive number of organizations around the church, based on Reformed principles. In line with Kuypier’s creed, these organizations were not part of the institutional church as such, but were “sovereign

⁹⁷“De kerk, waar zij zich vrij maakt van menselijke bindingen, die niet aan Gods Woord ontleend zijn, de kerk, uw moeder, die u liet geboren worden door het Woord en u sterkt door het Woord en de sacramenten, jage u de straat op, het leger in, jage u de school in, jage u onder of boven den grond, maar ze jage u in elk geval naar den arbeid voor het rijk der hemelen.” (Schilder, *VW44-45*, p. 144). See also Schilder, *VWKerk III*, pp. 182-184, where Schilder emphasizes again that church history *is* world history.

⁹⁸“Het komt er dus voor ons allen op aan ‘Groote Kerk’ te blijven, ook al vergaderen we in een gymnastieklokaal” (Schilder, *VW44-45*, p. 437). Here he plays with the meaning of the term “Groote Kerk”, which was often the name of the oldest, main church in a village. The years after the schism, the liberated often had no church building of their own, and gathered in rented facilities like gyms.

in their own sphere". They were part of what Kuyper had called the church as organism: The people of the institutional church active in "all spheres of life".⁹⁹ There were elementary schools, high schools, a political party, a university, a labor union, Bible study alliances, student societies, etc. Kuyper emphasized the independence of the other spheres, but still argued for a firm rooting in "Reformed principles".¹⁰⁰ As we saw above (section 4.3.5), Schilder valued Kuyper's distinction, but opted for the confession rather than Reformed principles as the foundation of the spheres. The significance of the confession for the church's public role, as we saw, became undisputed when Schilder defended the right of the church to ban members from the National Socialist Party along with those from a pacifist party. If one adds Schilder's emphasis on the *church* as the hub of the spheres,¹⁰¹ it should come as no surprise that these organizations' relations to the church came to be an issue following the ecclesial schism of 1944. A schism in the church as the heart of cultural life, it seemed, must have ramifications for those organizations. The tension between the narrow understanding of the church and the church as God's new humanity is clearly on the table.

The outcome of the debate was not clear from the outset. Schilder had never shunned cooperation with other Christians outside of his church, as I have shown repeatedly above. Why would the schism change anything to that conviction? Many argued along those lines and sought to continue cooperation in schools, politics, and the many other organizations. Especially from the side of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, the dominant line of thought was that the schism in the church need not have repercussions for the Antirevolutionary party. Especially there the stakes were high, since one's stance could mean a loss of votes for the party. As we have already seen, the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* were divided on the issue of continued cooperation, however. For Schilder the problem was not the confession, but something he called 'the ethical conflict'.¹⁰² In line with his emphasis on the juridical side of the conflict, he approached the matter of the organizations similarly. Every member of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, by staying in that church, implicitly agreed with the expulsions carried out by the synod and thus implicitly held these doctrinal decision to be matters of life and death, of inside and outside the kingdom. If that is the case, they should refuse to cooperate with the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*. The fact that most, if not all, of the synodical people saw no problem in continuing such cooperation brought about what Schilder called

⁹⁹Kuyper, *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁰Kuyper, *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring*, p. 27.

¹⁰¹Schilder, "Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven".

¹⁰²E.g., K. Schilder. "Jaaroverzicht 1948". In: *Handboek ten dienste van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland 1949*. Ed. by K. Schilder. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1949, p. 166 and "Zelfstandig optreden in de politiek IV" in: *De Reformatie* 22-31, p. 243 (May 10, 1947).

the ‘ethical conflict’. The conflict was ethical because those people were showing themselves untruthful in having a double agenda, rejecting Schilder and others in the church, but accepting them everywhere else.¹⁰³ In that sense it was again a matter of the public nature of the confession, but now the other way around: “If you confess something on Sunday, you should also confess it on Monday. And the other way around. Do not take something very seriously on Sunday, and call it a side issue on Monday”, so Schilder reproached the synodicals. That is a “two-faced” posture.¹⁰⁴ Or, in plain language: “A bungler in one domain, a bungler in the other.”¹⁰⁵

Again we should not overlook the biographical element in Schilder’s approach. For how could he trust the very people who had implicitly agreed with his suspension and dismissal? Schilder felt betrayed. More than anything, he could not accept the hypocrisy: “It was a slap in the face...”¹⁰⁶ On another occasion, Schilder wrote: “If we were dealing with synodicals who were honest about their case, then I believe I would be the first to declare: let us keep politics and the church matters separate insofar as the latter do not touch political questions. [...] The worst is that people are so mean in their actions. I simply do not feel safe anymore.”¹⁰⁷ Just as Schilder had been critical of Kierkegaard breaking his vows to his fiancée, now he could not stand the betrayal, the two-faced posture he thought to perceive in the synodicals. Trust in the community of the church was key for the loneliness to which inclined Schilder.

The issue of the ‘ethical conflict’ was a new one. Such a conflict had not existed before with *Hervormden* or other *Gereformeerden*. On the other hand, there is also continuity. The connection Schilder had drawn between church and society was always an individual connection, not an institutional one. In 1936 it was the church putting a ban on its *members* for personal choices they made in the realm outside of the church. The church has no direct jurisdiction over other organizations. Thus, to frame this controversy as an ethical problem

¹⁰³See Schilder, *VW44-45*, pp. 116-119, “Confessie en organisatie III” in: *De Reformatie* 23-23, p. 182-184 (March 6, 1948), and the references in the previous footnote.

¹⁰⁴“Als ge iets op Zondag belijdt, belijdt het dan ook op Maandag. En omgekeerd. Noem niet op Zondag een probleem van grooten ernst, wat ge ’s Maandags als bijzaak aandient.” “...dubbelhartig...” “Confessie en organisatie III” in: *De Reformatie* 23-23, p. 183 (March 6, 1948).

¹⁰⁵“een knoeier in de één in een knoeier in de ander.” (Naschrift bij “Onze houding to de AR partij” in: *De Reformatie* 26-37, p. 295 (June 16, 1951)).

¹⁰⁶“Ze hebben precies op het h rt getrapt...” “Zelfstandig optreden in de politiek II” in: *De Reformatie* 23-29, p. 225 (April 26, 1947).

¹⁰⁷“Hadden wij met ‘synodalen’ te doen, die eerlijk stonden voor hun zaak, dan zou, geloof ik, ondergeteekende de eerste zijn, om te verklaren: houd de politiek erbuiten voor zoover de zaken-in-geding geen politieke quaesties raken, [...] Ik herhaal: het ergste is, dat er zoo g m  n gehandeld is en wordt. Men voelt zich niet meer veilig” (“Naschrift der redactie” in: *De Reformatie* 22-45, p. 366 (August 16, 1947)).

fits that earlier line of argument. It is through its individual members and their ethics that the church exerts its influence over the organizations. This is how the church is the hub of the spheres, namely through individual empowerment. As such, a crisis in the hub immediately represents a crisis across all terrains. However, as I will show below, Schilder ends up radicalizing his position as a result of the schism.

While for Schilder the ethical conflict was the guiding principle, others thought along the lines of the ongoing reformation. As I noted above, this idea had its roots in the Reformational Movement as described in the previous chapter (section 4.1.2).¹⁰⁸ Although many members of that movement stayed in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, just as many ended up in the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*. They hoped to find new space for their movement of renewal. Van Langevelde is correct to note that the ongoing reformation in the churches mirrored the cultural climate of reconstruction after the war, exemplified in the population of the *Noordoostpolder* which had recently been reclaimed from the water.¹⁰⁹ Johannes Francke, a *vrijgemaakte* minister who strongly favored an independent political organization, writes in 1947: "By means of the *Vrijmaking* the Lord has opened our eyes for the appalling deformation, the enormous secularization in the abandonment of the Word of the Lord."¹¹⁰ Such judgments eventually produced the more positive idea of ongoing reformation as it rose to prominence. The *Vrijmaking* was a multifaceted schism. For some, like Schilder, the church-political injustice formed the heart of the matter. For others, especially those associated with the Reformational Movement, the hope for renewal was more important, which explains the early positive tone heralded by many. This was a chance for true renewal! For already in 1944, around the time of Schilder's suspension, these words figure in letters that were sent to the synod objecting to Schilder's suspension and accusing it of obstructing 'ongoing reformation' by suspending him.¹¹¹ Later on, this term came to mean that the Reformation of the church which, according to many, the *Vrijmaking* indeed represented, needed to be continued in everyday life. Although that emphasis was not completely out of line with Schilder's emphasis on the ethical conflict, its tone certainly was more positive.

¹⁰⁸Langevelde, *In het klimaat van het absolute*, p. 328.

¹⁰⁹Langevelde, *In het klimaat van het absolute*, pp. 324-325.

¹¹⁰"Door de vrijmaking zijn onze oogen door den HEERE geopend voor de ontzettende DE-formatie, de enorme verwereldlijking door de verlating van het Woord des HEEREN" (J.A. Francke, "De vrijgemaakte gereformeerden en de anti-revolutionaire partij en politiek" in: *De Reformatie* 22-17, p. 134 (February 1, 1947)).

¹¹¹R. J. Dam et al. *Aan de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, bijeen te Utrecht op 16 Maart 1944*. 1944, p. 1 and P. M. J. Mekkes and J. J. van der Wiel. *Twee leden van de Gereformeerde Kerk van 's-Gravenhage-Oost, Mekkes en van der Wiel, hebben 19 juni 1944 tot den Raad dier kerk een brief gericht van den volgende inhoud*: 1944, pp. 1, 10.

Doorbraak and Barth There is one possible application of the churches' concrete role in the world that was clearly not as Schilder envisioned it. The War had profoundly shaken Dutch society and changed the climate. The necessity of 'reconstruction' (*wederopbouw*) from the destruction inflicted by the war produced a strong sense of community that transcended the pillars that had characterized Dutch Society before the war. Many heralded the end of the segregation of different 'pillars' and the dawn of a new time. This movement was soon baptized the *Doorbraak*, the breakthrough, and led to a new political party, the Labour Party, a merger of both confessional and non-confessional parties.¹¹² Not surprisingly, Schilder saw in this movement a denial of the necessity of Christian organizations, which he had detected earlier in the thought of Karl Barth and his Dutch followers. Thus Schilder issues a very familiar critique on the way some Barthian ministers joined the Labour Party, insisting that Barthianism is the disconnection of God and concrete life. In 1946 he says the same thing in new terms in a polemic with the Barthian theologian Gerrit van Niftrik (1904-1972): "Barthianism is the shortest route to secularization, since it steers away from any Christian program whatsoever."¹¹³ Where Rome had created a dualism between a sacred and profane space, Barth now replaces that dualism with a new one between God and humankind. At this point, Schilder echoes his old critique on Barth concerning the separation between time and eternity. The concrete consequence is that "Christian programs" are "secularized confessions", Schilder writes, quoting the Dutch theologian A.A. van Ruler. No, says Schilder, "God's grace gives powers" in this world, powers to "draft serious programs, provided they are constantly guided by Scripture"¹¹⁴ Schilder understands the danger of triumphalism of which Van Niftrik accuses him, but that is not what the neo-Calvinists want, he insists. Schilder acknowledges that "God's Word never coincides with our politics or with our worldview. We know very well that in this life even the holiest have only a small beginning of this obedience".¹¹⁵ But if we take that too far, "we fail to see the *majesty* of God in the fact that he is known."¹¹⁶ Schilder's critique on the *Doorbraak* is again driven by his concern for the *presentia salutis*.¹¹⁷

In this new context of the *Doorbraak*, Schilder takes up old arguments against the Barthians. The connection between Barth and the *Doorbraak* is a fact, but his argument is almost an exact replica of his article on Christian

¹¹²Jong, *Nederland in de Tweede Wereldoorlog 12-1*, pp. 186-197.

¹¹³Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 163.

¹¹⁴Schilder, *VWKerk III*, pp. 163-164.

¹¹⁵Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 44.

¹¹⁶"Wegens het niet meer zien van de *majesteit* van God in zijn bekend zijn." (Schilder, *VWKerk III*, p. 167).

¹¹⁷See also Schilder, *VW44-45*, pp. 133-145, 154-158 for Schilder's critique on the *Doorbraak*.

politics from 1933.¹¹⁸ Schilder's response shows that the synod of Assen is still leaving a strong mark on his Barth interpretation. This is confirmed by his repeated emphasis on revelation and the *autopistia*, the self-convincing character, of Scripture.¹¹⁹ Schilder continued the Kuyprian ideal of the Christian life in organizations based on Christian principles. Neither the ecclesial schism, nor the phase of upbuilding after the war changed anything in that ideal.

For our inquiry into Schilder's position in the debate over the ongoing reformation, it is important to note that his defence of Christian organizations does not take place in the context of that debate. The defence is the retelling of a well-known story against Barth.

Schilder's position The ethical conflict was for Schilder a key motif in his position in the 'ongoing reformation' debate. In this sense he was sympathetic to the idea of separate organizations. Contrarily, we have seen above how Schilder disagreed with some of the more radical champions of the 'ongoing reformation', mostly for pragmatic reasons, emphasizing the necessity of 'cold cooperation' with those of other faiths (section 5.2.3). As we showed in this section, the 'ethical conflict' was an obstacle for Schilder in cooperation, at least for what he called 'warm cooperation' with people from the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. How are these two strands to be resolved?

A first step is to look at Schilder's concrete recommendations. A clear advice for separation was given for the youth Bible study organization. This is not surprising given this organization's close ties to the church, arranging for local youth Bible study groups as well as national conferences. Schilder recommended the foundation of a new organization, despite attempts by the existing organization to keep the *vrijgemaakten* in.¹²⁰ A separate organization was quickly formed.

In terms of primary education, Schilder's desire for separate schools was equally clear. This was especially so since some in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* warned against the *vrijgemaakten* on the basis that they did not consider their children to be part of the covenant yet. Although this was a misunderstanding of Schilder's position, tensions in education were to be expected given the doctrinal issues over the position of children in the covenant.¹²¹ A few years later, when the dust of the schism had settled a bit, Schilder maintained his position, but also

¹¹⁸"Christelijke politiek in gevaar I-VI" in: *De Reformatie* 14-8 - 14-20 (November 24, 1933 - February 16, 1934).

¹¹⁹Schilder, *VWKerk III*, pp. 167-8.

¹²⁰"Brieven aan een jongere tijdgenoot nr. 15: Mevrouw Parmentier aan het woord" in: *De Reformatie* 20-49, p. 7 (July 27, 1945).

¹²¹"Opvoeding en onderwijs: Een hoofdpijl: 1905?" in: *De Reformatie* 21-17, p. 125 (January 26, 1946).

mentions primary education as an example of a place where ‘cold cooperation’ would be necessary.¹²² In the meantime, several *vrijgemaakte* primary schools were founded throughout the country, which over the course of the following decades took the shape of a national network. In 1950 a separate school for the education of teachers was set up.¹²³ This was new. The interdenominational character of Reformed primary education had never been an issue for Schilder. His colleague Holwerda had lectured on Reformed primary schools in 1941, and did not mention the link with the church even once. The emphasis had always been on the school and the parents. By 1945, however, Holwerda’s position had made a 180-degree turn.¹²⁴

With regard to the Society of Calvinist Philosophy, Schilder also argued for breakup, painful though it was.¹²⁵ This society was at the heart of the Reformational Movement, and one of his best friends, Dirk Vollenhoven, was a prominent member who had not followed him in the *Vrijmaking*. Their friendship never returned to its former glory.¹²⁶

This is, however, not the whole story. In the previous section, I showed how Schilder argued for the possibility of differing opinions within the church, also on this matter. Although he for the most part sided with the champions of the ongoing reformation, he was not among its most radical advocates. On the issue of politics, Schilder was hesitant, as we already saw above. He certainly agreed that also in the political sphere, cooperation would be difficult and certainly not ‘warm’. He simply doubted that it would be possible to form a political party from a single church community. In fact, he never sided with the political party founded by the *vrijgemaakten* in 1948, the *Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond*.¹²⁷ In the elections of that same year, he explicitly recommended voting for the Antirevolutionary party.¹²⁸ Even though the *vrijgemaakt* party did not yet participate in those elections, there were others who found Schilder’s advice halfhearted. His reply was, again, a resort to the realist argument.¹²⁹ At other instances as well, Schilder seemed to fear the utmost consequence of what he

¹²²“Stemmen uit onze kerken” in: *De Reformatie* 23-38, p. 321-322 (June 19, 1948).

¹²³Kuiper, “Vrijmaking of wederkeer”, pp. 26-27.

¹²⁴J. Messelink. “Vijftig jaar gereformeerd onderwijs: achtergronden, motieven, opgaven”. In: *1944 en vervolgens*. Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 1994, pp. 29–41, pp. 30-33.

¹²⁵“Confessie en organisatie I” in: *De Reformatie* 23-21, p. 167-168 (February 21, 1948).

¹²⁶E. A. de Boer. “Biografie van een vriendschap: K. Schilder, D.H.Th. Vollenhoven, en de calvinistische wijsbegeerte.” In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, pp. 81–116, pp. 100-109.

¹²⁷See E. H. Klei. *‘Klein maar krachtig, dat maakt ons uniek’: een geschiedenis van het Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond, 1948-2003*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2011 for the history of the *Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond*.

¹²⁸“Stemmen?” in: *De Reformatie* 23-39, p. 329 (June 26, 1948).

¹²⁹“Tot entscheidung brengen I” in: *De Reformatie* 23-42, p. 352-353 (July 17, 1948).

himself advocated. After pleading for a separate youth Bible study alliance, he ends by saying that cooperation with others will remain inevitable, since we do not want to become “stylites”, pillar-saints.¹³⁰

At this point, it is impossible to ignore the publication of *Christ and Culture* in 1948, which would become one of Schilder's most widely read and translated books. The main argument of this book had been published before as a chapter in a collected volume, and as such stems from an earlier period, in whose context it has already been discussed (3.4.1). While the main argument remains intact, the new standalone version has a number of insightful additions, which have already been discussed in the previous chapter (section 4.3.2): The distinction between *koinonia* and *sunousia*, and the notion of common temperance. Schilder quite probably rewrote the work during his trip to the U.S. in 1947. This means that the additions were written in the context of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* and the discussions of the ‘ongoing reformation’. As I noted above, Schilder interrupted his series on politics for his trip. Once aboard the ship, he took up his pen and continued by rewriting *Christ and Culture*.¹³¹ As if to emphasize the contextual nature of these additions, Schilder summarized some of the more significant ones in *De Reformatie* in the months following his return.¹³²

If we now read those additions in the context of the ‘ongoing reformation’, we once again find Schilder affirming the mixed reality of culture and the necessity of cooperation. The ideal, the only true culture, is indeed in the *koinonia* of a pure ecclesial culture; the reality, however, is that of a *sunousia* where not only the synodicals, but even “the candidates for death”, participate.¹³³ This *sunousia* was for Schilder a matter of principle: “The tension that arises from our continuous conflict with ‘this’ world and the command never to go out of ‘the’ world is ultimately the tension between the lot of our being in the *sunousia*

¹³⁰“Brieven aan een jongere tijdgenoot nr. 15: Mejjuffrouw Parmentier aan het woord” in: *De Reformatie* 20-49, p. 7 (July 27, 1945).

¹³¹See Schilder's foreword, “a/b S.S. ‘Veendam’, 24 Augustus 1947.” Schilder, *Christus en cultuur*, p. 5. The ship reached New York on August 25 (“Préliminaire” in: *De Reformatie* 22-49, p. 394-395 (September 13, 1947)). Schilder had boarded the ship on August 16, remarking that his time for keeping a journal for the trip would be “limited due to the presence of publishers in this world” (“Inschepping” in: *De Reformatie* 22-46, p. 370 (August 16, 1947)). It is obvious that Schilder worked on the book on his trip across the Atlantic Ocean, although we cannot say with certainty whether it was during this crossing that he added the *koinoonia/sunousia* distinction. After all, the plan for a standalone publication dated from the mid-thirties, and so he may have been working on the manuscript earlier. What we do know for sure, however, is that Schilder prepared to publish it in the context of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*.

¹³²“Koinoonia” en “sunousia” and “Temperantie en tempering” in: *De Reformatie* 23-27, p. 225 (April 3, 1948).

¹³³Schilder, *Christ and Culture*, p. 112, “de kandidaten van den dood.” (Schilder, *Christus en cultuur*, p. 78).

and our daily duty to be part of the *koinonia*.”¹³⁴

5.3.3 Conclusion

In section 4.3.2, I dealt with the critique voiced by Douma and Van Ruler that Schilder ends up with a separate Christian culture. There I concluded that, although his thought can easily be interpreted in that direction, that is not what Schilder wanted. In section 4.3.4, I noted that Schilder’s ecclesiology witnesses a tension between the broad interpretation of the church as God’s new humanity on the one hand, and the church in the narrow sense as the institution alone on the other. I also noted that this tension accounts for why Schilder cannot really part with the church as organism, despite his critique. How did this develop into this last period marked by the schism?

Overall, the picture I sketched in chapter 4 is confirmed in Schilder’s position in the schism. However, as was also true for the true church, so the schism led to a certain radicalization on the issue of the relationship between the church and the organizations. I will first examine the continuity, and then turn to the discontinuity.¹³⁵

First, Schilder continues to emphasize the connection between Sunday and Monday. The church is not just one of the spheres, but is their very hub. A conflict in the church will always have consequences for all of life. When the synodicals started to suggest that this connection could be relativized, it was to be expected that Schilder would strongly object. This explains the ‘ethical conflict’. The ethical conflict is a reaction, not a building program. This reaction of a relativization of the church is what causes Schilder’s plea for separation. Schilder had always kept some distance from the Reformational Movement, and continued to do so with the ‘ongoing reformation’. Although he was not the man of positive construction in terms of culture, but rather emphasized the empowerment of daily life, he believed that Christian, Reformed organizations are always something to aspire to. Schilder countered the Barthians before the war and after the war in the *Doorbraak* in the same way, by arguing in favor of Christian organizations. However, Christian organizations were never a matter of principle, let alone programmatic. Back in the 1930s, Schilder had also said that a Reformed radio station would be preferable, but not attainable, making

¹³⁴Schilder, *Christ and Culture*, pp. 166-167, “De spanning, die er ligt tusschen het voortdurend conflict met ‘deze’ wereld, en het nooit mogen gaan uit ‘de’ wereld, is tenslotte die tusschen het lot der ‘sunousia’ en den plicht tot ‘koinoonia’.” (Schilder, *Christus en cultuur*, p. 114).

¹³⁵See also W. G. de Vries. “Schilder en de vrijmaking”. In: *Geen duimbreed! Facetten van leven en werk van prof. dr. K. Schilder 1890-1952*. Ed. by G. Harinck and J. de Bruijn. Baarn: Ten Have, 1990, pp. 165–171, p. 167, who agrees that “the *vrijmaking* was not a breach with the struggle of his life, but the confirmation of it.”

cooperation unavoidable (section 3.4.3). This same stance will characterize the present period: Schilder eventually became a moderate voice in the 'ongoing reformation', and in this context provided a thicker theological rationale for cooperation in the notions of common temperance and *sunousia*. This serves to explain his hesitation towards the Antirevolutionary party, as he seemed to believe that the duty of *sunousia* applied here.

Secondly, there is also discontinuity. As we also saw above with regard to the true church, there is some radicalization. First, the connection of the church to concrete organizations was never a matter of concern for Schilder as it was now. Theoretically, he advocated for the church as the hub of the spheres. Around the synod in 1936, his reflection became concrete because of the ban on membership in two political parties, but for the rest Schilder never made his view concrete. This is a change in his thought, once again inspired by a changed context. Second, Schilder tightens the knot more than we have seen him do before. The cause for this tightening is so clearly the new context of the schism, the 'ethical conflict', that it should not be overemphasized, and especially not given the way the connection never became a matter of principle for him.

What this period also confirms is, as I had promised above, that the tension between the broad and the narrow church clearly surfaces. How far exactly the tentacles of the institution extend remains a tension. On the one hand the organizations around the church were important, on the other hand they were never essential. Telling is the interview that George Puchinger hosted between Kees Veenhof and Jaap Kamphuis in 1966, barely a year before their ways would separate in the 1967 schism. They discussed whether or not Schilder argued for a *Corpus Christianum*, an organized Christian body around the church. Veenhof says: "Schilder certainly did not adhere to the idea of a *Corpus Christianum*. He was too convinced of the apocalyptic situation of the church. [...] Schilder was not a cultural optimist. [...] Schilder had no plans or goals. He just wanted to live in the climate of the Sermon on the Mount in every situation." Kamphuis replied: "His goals, however, were certainly something like a *Corpus Christianum*? He hoped for an effect of the Word in all of life, without false expectations."¹³⁶ I would argue that in a sense both were right.

At the same time, the new context following the *Vrijmaking* helps to clarify Schilder's position on the concrete consequences of the church's public nature. The ethical conflict shows that for Schilder the connection between the church and the organizations rests entirely on the individual and his or her confession. The church is the hub of the spheres through its members. The question of the organizations is contextual, not essential. Schilder expresses his preference for separate organization wherever possible, but advocates a realist position: a

¹³⁶Puchinger, *Is de gereformeerde wereld veranderd*, p. 219.

true involvement with the world will entail *sunousia*. The wish to organize separately may never be an excuse for abstention. Schilder even allowed for disagreement over the matter, insisting that those who wished to stay in the 'old' organizations should never be expelled. The church as God's humanity is a community of believers. This community together forms the church, only when it gathers as church, on Sundays around Word and Sacrament. This same community also shapes God's kingdom as individuals in the world. Christian organizations are essential for a concrete expression of this engagement with the world. The ecclesial ties of those organizations are preferable, but never essential: The church as church remains limited to its own sphere and engages the world only through its members and their confession.

5.4 Theological Conclusion

My focus in this chapter concerned the way the new context of the *Vrijmaking* shaped Schilder's thought.

First, the apocalyptic character of Schilder's theology, which we also noted in the first chapter, returns in this period with full force. That process already started in the previous period upon the German Invasion. The 'persecution' Schilder experienced in the schism only confirmed and enhanced this sentiment. It also worked the other way around: The apocalyptic tension of the war also fueled the schism, and strengthened the *vrijgemaakt* in their isolation. So two traits from the early Schilder clearly resurface: A critical ecclesiology, a church in tension, a context of war, an apocalyptic understanding of history. Schilder's theology was born in the wake of a war and flourished when war and apocalyptic awareness reappeared. His theology of culture and of the church's engagement is profoundly impacted by the eschatological framework: He sees a small and insignificant church that is persecuted. That is the church that Schilder is speaking about, that church should never abandon its cosmic cultural mandate. So too his view on the world is marked by this apocalyptic framework: The meagre cultural program, the emphasis on the battle between Christ and anti-christ, and the 'dialectical' turn from notions of commonness are all to be understood from this perspective.

Second, Schilder's emphasis on the distinct nature of the church centers on the notion of lawfulness. The *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* is the lawful church, over against the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. This aspect was already important before, but now receives all the attention. Schilder's adage that the church is decided by its confession, its institution, and not by its people, is taken to its extreme consequences. It reveals how far Schilder was willing to take this element, and how important it was for him—at least as important as the witness

of the church against the Nazi occupiers. We also saw how Schilder lost some of his reluctance to apply the notion of the true church to the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*. His reluctance does not disappear, however, nor does his dynamic emphasis: Being the true church is not an asset, but the highest responsibility imaginable. Again, Schilder responded furiously to complacency. This new context reveals that the tension between the dynamic and the institutional is difficult to maintain. The institutional, legal aspect has the tendency to prevail over the dynamic element.

Thirdly, the public character of the church continued to be understood as essential to its character. The smaller the church, the stronger Schilder seemed to emphasize its public character. This confirms our reading that also Christian culture is for Schilder a matter of faith, rather than empirical observation. The impact of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* on the Netherlands was minimal, but that fact does not change anything to the church's cosmic responsibility. The emphasis is on the obedience, not on the results. That also became clear in Schilder's position in the debate on the organizations. While I here again noted a radicalization and an increased concern for the ecclesial nature of the organizations, Schilder still does not give evidence of wanting to aspire to a cultural program or the construction of a new 'pillar'. Reformed organizations are to be aspired to and should not be shunned, but the eschatological reality is that of *sunousia*. At this point, the second tension in Schilder's ecclesiology surfaces: Is the church the narrow institution or is it God's new humanity? Both Schilder and his followers struggled with this tension. His emphasis on the ethical conflict confirms his understanding of the church's public role as coming primarily through the confession of its individual members. The church has to inspire, educate, and correct its members through the preaching of the Word, the Sacraments, and church discipline. That is how the church is a public church and an instrument for the enormous cultural mandate of the small remnant.

Finally, it is important to return to the spatial imagery of breadth and depth we used to describe Schilder's thought. Has the depth finally become victorious over the breadth? Is the distinct character of the church more important than its public engagement? This last section (5.3) has sufficiently shown that this was not the case for Schilder's own position. The smaller the church, the louder its global significance is articulated. Also concretely, the role of the church for Dutch society remained important.

Noteworthy, however, is the reception of Schilder's thoughts, as I noted the presence of two diverging strands within his own churches. There is also a duality in the *vrijgemaakte* reception and studies in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* that sheds light on the two aspects of Schilder's thought.

The clearest expression of this difference comes in the form an article by

Johan van Minnen on Schilder, and the subsequent review by Jaap Kamphuis. Van Minnen, a minister in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*, boldly claims that “at present it is, for example, professor Kuitert – and certainly not the *vrijgemaakt* – who is working in the line of Schilder, using the weapons forged by Berkouwer. Nowhere has Schilder been more misrepresented than among his own admirers.”¹³⁷ Van Minnen then applauds Schilder’s view on the covenant and on human responsibility as the core of his theology that was so poorly understood by his own contemporaries. Schilder was more successful than Kuyper in recovering the office of the Christian as a task in this world. At the end of his article, Van Minnen points also to Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Arnold Van Ruler who continued in Schilder’s line. Here van Minnen draws Schilder into the company of theologians who sought to understand the significance of the Christian life entirely in *this* world (Kuitert, Van Ruler, and Bonhoeffer).¹³⁸ Van Minnen sees what Noordmans also saw, namely that Schilder radicalizes Kuyper’s cultural program. The difference is that Noordmans is horrified by what he sees, while Van Minnen praises Schilder for it.¹³⁹ As one might expect, Kamphuis is appalled by Van Minnen’s analysis.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, he responds, Schilder does emphasize the covenant and a broad cultural vocation, but he never played off covenant against election. Schilder was not a universalist, contrary to Kuitert, Berkouwer, and Barth. Where is Schilder’s emphasis on the sovereignty of God? And what about his criticism on Barth’s doctrine of revelation, and his defence of Scripture, Kamphuis rightly asks.

The discussion in these articles serves to illustrate the two strands of Schilder reception, with Van Minnen, Berkouwer, Kuitert, and Jager on the *synodale* side¹⁴¹, and Trimp, Kamphuis, and Dee on the *vrijgemaakte* side.¹⁴² They adequately reflect the deep and the broad line in Schilder’s thought that had indeed proved difficult to keep in balance. Kamphuis’s questions to Van Minnen are justified, since the latter offers a mere caricature of Schilder. As I have repeatedly emphasized, revelation, predestination, and the sovereignty of God

¹³⁷“We kunnen zeggen, dat nu b.v. Prof. Kuitert – en zeker niet de “vrijgemaakten”, – met de wapens, die Berkouwer smeedde – aan dit front, in de lijn van Schilder bezig is. De ergste miskenning vond Schilder immers bij zijn bewonderaars.” Minnen, “Een dichter-schriftgeleerde tussen hemel en hel”.

¹³⁸I realize I am not doing justice to the work of Bonhoeffer and Van Ruler, and the way they, and particularly Bonhoeffer, were interpreted in different directions.

¹³⁹See more extensively Minnen, “Licht in den Rook”.

¹⁴⁰J. Kamphuis. “Schilder - Kuitert - Wiskerke”. In: *De Reformatie* 46.5 (1970), pp. 38–39, pp. 38–39.

¹⁴¹It is important to note that this discussion takes place in 1970, when Kuitert has not yet made his move to liberal Protestantism as he would make it later on in his life.

¹⁴²There is, of course, more nuance than the divide we have made here suggests. For example, Jochem Douma on the *vrijgemaakte* side, and George Puchinger in the *synodale* camp, offered more balanced interpretations.

are key elements in Schilder's theology. At the same time, Kamphuis fails to see the degree to which Schilder's theology is indeed earthly in nature. It is the *praesentia salutis* that is the prime concern: God's presence as concretely as possible. The line from Schilder to Kuitert is not a total anomaly. The way Schilder defines the significance of Christ and the church in terms of the cultural mandate is indeed radical. This paves the way, even if not necessarily, for a Christianity *as* culture, and indeed creates an opening towards certain interpretations of Bonhoeffer in the line of the 'death of God' theology. This is the "paganism on clogs" that Noordmans so feared in Schilder (section 3.4.1). In this respect, Van Minnen was right to note that the *vrijgemaakt* did not "take over Schilder's torch".¹⁴³

The *Vrijmaking* indeed put Schilder on the track of the depth strand in his thought, as can be clearly seen in the history of its reception and in Schilder's own emphases during this last period. A distinct, lawful church is everything for the church's engagement. This is indeed an essential part of Schilder's message. The depth should never lose the breadth, however. A church that is only inwardly focused and closes the shutters loses the connection to Christ. This tension lies at the very heart of Schilder's conception of the church's relationship to the world.

¹⁴³Minnen, "Een dichter-schriftgeleerde tussen hemel en hel".

A Neo-Calvinist Ecclesial Turn?

The previous four chapters presented the results of our inquiry into the world and thought of Klaas Schilder with regard to his perception of the church-world relationship. They have shown how the house of Schilder's thought grew through the four periods of his personal and intellectual development. The first period offered the rough drawings of the mansion. From 1926 onwards, the contours of the building became increasingly clear. From 1935, Schilder worked on the floor, paintwork, woodwork, and wiring, as it were. The final period after the ecclesial schism we saw the house, though as yet unfinished, begin to be inhabited by actual people, as Schilder, unwillingly, became the leader of a schism and a church began to take shape in which his ideals were leading. This provided a real-life test for those ideas. Consequently, the tensions and problems in his design surfaced clearly.

This chapter will summarize and draw conclusions from the previous four, and come back full circle to the first, introductory chapter. To this end, this chapter has two parts. The first is a systematic-theological sum of the previous four chapters. We will leave our historical observations behind as having done their work, and focus on the systematic conclusions. This section then prepares the way for the second, where I will reconnect these insights to the contemporary debates surrounding the ecclesial turn, and to Hauerwas in particular. As I indicated in the introduction, the intention is not to offer a full comparison between Schilder and Hauerwas. This is a book about Schilder, and Hauerwas only serves as a bridge for entering the house of his thought. In this section, I will accompany the reader on the way back across that bridge to help connect the outcome of the present study to contemporary concerns.

6.1 Schilder's Contribution

6.1.1 Consistency

The image of the house suggests great consistency in Schilder's thought. That is indeed what I sought to demonstrate, and it is the first conclusion I want to present here. A first reading of Schilder is not suggestive of consistent unity. Some scholars have indeed found traces of Schilder's later thought in his early work.¹ So too others have noted a number of developments.² My claim is largely in line with these insights, although I advance the claim that Schilder's work does reflect a strong internal consistency.³ This claim is significant in light of the first impression Schilder's work generally leaves, as noted above. I have often mentioned how his writings are occasional, contextual, and ad hoc in nature. Even into the classroom, Schilder's work is polemical. This makes the claim of consistency somewhat surprising. Behind the apparent disorder of journalistic activity, polemical series and brochures, and lengthy academic lectures, we find a rather astounding consistency hidden. This consistency, as I have argued, is one that spans Schilder's entire lifetime. The developments that do occur are like those of a house that is constructed over time, without altering the original plans and the intended framework.

With this thesis I would like to counter claims of two Schilders.⁴ The consistency in Schilder's thought disputes such claims. The developments that can indeed be found are a result of two factors. The first is the changing context. Schilder's initial occupation with the arts, which seems to be exchanged for a concern for the church, is not the result of a change in his theology. Rather, he believed that a new context required new battles, and he himself applies the 'abstinence option' he had proposed. The second reason is that some seeds or sketches, albeit visible in Schilder's early writings, have not yet come to full development there.

Where the metaphor of the house serves to explain the development and consistency in Schilder's thought, the spatial image of breadth and depth as I used it serves to explain his twofold concern when it comes to the church's role

¹Berkouwer, *Zoeken en vinden*, pp. 255-256, 263, Dee in Schilder, *Eenzaamheid en gemeenschap*, p. 143, Douma, *Algemene genade*, pp. 201-203 (ET Douma, *Common Grace*, pp. 229-232).

²Douma, *Algemene genade*, pp. 185-203 (ET Douma, *Common Grace*, pp. 210-232) and Jager, "Concretiseren tot het uiterste", pp. 70-74.

³I thus follow in the line of Buys, *Sodat hulle een kan wees*, p. 16, Veldhuizen, *God en mens onderweg*, p. 338, Jager, "Concretiseren tot het uiterste", pp. 63, 66, Strauss, *Alles of niks*, pp. 62-63 and Bekkum, "Klaas Schilder", pp. 123-124.

⁴This claim is articulated in different ways in Werkman, "Schilder en de literatuur", p. 130, Veldhuizen, *God en mens onderweg*, p. 339, by Kuitert in Puchinger, *Is de gereformeerde wereld veranderd*, p. 346, and in Batteau, "Schilder on the Church", pp. 74-80 (section 2.3).

in the world. This image was handed to us by Schilder himself in the admiration he expressed for the breadth of the Roman Catholic priest-politician Schaepman and the depth of the Flemish poet Gezelle (section 2.1.4). Applied to the church, a nice parallel can be formed in the relationship between the distinct character of the church as the depth, and its engagement with the world as the breadth. Broad and deep are, however, terms that frame Schilder's theology as an answer to the secularization and changed cultural context after the First World War. As such, the depth is his concern for the preservation of the identity of the church and the Christian faith in times where that is no longer self-evident. In the first period, the church is only a part of Schilder's solution for this concern (chapter 2), while in the period following the Second World War, there seems to be nothing but the lawful church (chapter 5). The breadth, then, is the challenge of the Christian not to withdraw into the secluded life of the church, which may seem to be what the 'depth concern' demands. What is in all of this Schilder's view on the world, creation, and how does the church fit in? What is the nature of the church, and how should it engage with the world? I will answer these questions by describing Schilder's position in a systematic way, engaging in conversation with others where my view differs. On a second level, I will also indicate some tensions and problems that occur in Schilder's proposal.

6.1.2 Creation, Culture, Fall

For Schilder, an account of the church begins with creation. To "return to the ABC of creation" is, after all, one of his core principles. For every theological question we have to look back before the fall, and continue our argument from that point. For Schilder, as will be shown, this even applies to the church.

This starting point is decisive for Schilder's theological framework, including his ecclesiology. It is here that we learn why human beings are on earth, that it is God's intention to have them unfold and develop his creation (Gen. 1:26-28). That is what it means to be created in God's image, reflecting his image as his stewards of creation, his co-workers. That is how Schilder brands the cultural mandate, which is the ultimate purpose of life: To glorify God by working with him in this world and developing creation. Thus, God's creation, the world, planet earth, is the shop floor of the human species. It is the Creator's intention to have humanity develop his creation, the world, towards its fulfillment in the new earth. For the new heaven and earth were, according to Schilder, part of God's plan already before the fall. They are not in the first place a fix for the consequences of sin, but the fulfillment through divine intervention of the development of this creation. This divine intervention is what Schilder calls moments of 'shock', which he contrasts with the human-divine cooperation in 'evolution'. Just as the days of creation were moments of 'shock', so the

moment of transition to a new world is a shock. This twofold structure of 'evolution' and 'shock' is the fabric of the one creation where God and humans cooperate. Humans find their destination in reflecting the image of God in their stewardship of creation. The way Schilder highlights human cooperation and responsibility is an emphasis that is not characteristic of his tradition, and has a distinctly modern hue.

This mandate for creation has the nature of a covenant (section 4.2.3). Although a later development in Schilder's thought, the covenant becomes an essential building block for him. Schilder articulates a single covenant, the covenant of works, which continues after the fall. The covenant is the encompassing framework for the relationship between God and the human race. God and people are partners in a forensic framework. The partners are not equal: God initiates the covenant, but in his sovereignty he allocates a role of responsibility to the human partner. The content of the covenant is God's demand of loyalty, love, and commitment from his partner, and at the same time the promise of his own love and commitment. These are the stipulations of the one covenant 'of works'. God's central demand in the covenant is the cultural mandate. This situation is 'church' insofar as God speaks to people, and they gather in response to that calling.

Then, however, humanity began to disobey God's demands in the covenant by falling into sin (Gen. 3). The consequence of the fall is a rupture between God and humankind. Sin's consequences are pervasive: Knowledge of God has become problematic, and the human ability to fulfil God's demands in the covenant is dissolved. Instead of God's promises, people now face God's wrath. Humanity faces eternal death and a cursed life on earth. The depth and range of sin cannot be underestimated. The First World War and Schilder's theological analysis have convinced him that sin contaminates creation as a whole. Consequently, he leaves no room for general revelation or common grace, let alone a natural theology (section 4.3.1). This marks a sharp departure from his neo-Calvinist forebears Kuyper and Bavinck. In the face of rising secularization, Schilder eschews notions of commonness, and in that respect departs, like Karl Barth, from his tradition. Schilder criticized Barth, however, for creating a structural distance between God and his creation. With Barth, says Schilder, the *praesentia salutis* is in peril. Barth undermines the possibility of knowing and trusting God, and makes Christian ethics an impossibility. The distance between God and humankind exists only because of sin, Schilder echoes Kuyper, not as a matter of principle. Schilder thus affirms the *gratia intra naturam*, God is both transcendent and immanent.

6.1.3 Christ and the Church

Immediately after the fall, God intervenes by sending Christ as a mediator. In Christ, God offers a way out of the predicament of sin. In Christ, the original covenant of works is continued as a covenant of grace, because its fulfillment is now only possible in Christ by grace. The original cultural mandate of that covenant still stands as the purpose of the human race on earth. In Christ and by faith, this once again becomes possible. Christ was the human being who again obeyed God's command, he was the last Adam who succeeded where the first had failed. Christ enables humans to become faithful covenant partners once again, and to obey the original mandate from before the fall. Salvation is thus entirely a matter of re-creation. Christ did not come to "save souls", but to restore the possibility of life on earth according to God's original intentions. Christ comes to restore what once was. In that sense, he brings nothing new. The incarnation was only necessary because of the fall and thus ultimately contingent. Only in Christ can sin be overcome and the cultural mandate made available and possible again. Outside of Christ, there is no possibility for true culture. In Christ, the ultimate vocation is to do culture.

Since the fall and Christ's intervention, a dividing line that was not there before runs through history. Some believe in Christ and partake in his mediation, while others reject him and remain in sin. The covenant now continues with those who are in Christ, and the others do not partake in the covenant. This is where the church becomes discernible as a separate element in creation: the church is the circle of the covenant. The way Christ operates in this world and gathers his people through his Word and Spirit is in and through the church. True culture is thus born from the church, God's new humanity. True culture becomes impossible outside of the church. As such, Schilder ties church and true culture together in a radical way as neither Kuyper nor Bavinck had done.

This positioning of the church places its roots in creation (section 4.3.3). Just like the covenant, the church is not a new creation but dates back to before the fall. It is this theological reasoning that is decisive for the place of the church in Schilder's theology. This is captured in the title of this thesis: The church is the means, the world is the end. This central notion of the church's roots in creation is also decisive for the church's nature. Not only is this decisive for the church's goal of engagement with the world, it is also decisive for its catholicity.

6.1.4 The Church is the Means, the World is the End

The *praesentia salutis* is Schilder's core theological concern. This reveals his deep concern for this earth, for creation. Christ's coming serves this ultimate end of re-creation, God's history with the cosmos, the development of his original

creation. As Christ's body, the church finds its fulfillment in restoring God's attention for his creation through the human cultural mandate. The church is the means, the world is the end. All that Schilder has written about the nature of the church is to be understood within this framework. The church is a means.⁵

Schilder's vision may seem daunting, overly optimistic, and programmatic.⁶ It seems as if the church is a place where the light of Christ shines brightly in the dark place that is the world. Noordmans as well as Van Ruler read Schilder as an affirmation of the activist milieu in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. Schilder was accused of Roman Catholic ecclesiocentrism, Arminianism, and an Anabaptist realized eschatology, failing to take sufficient account of sin. While these criticisms all have a certain degree of validity, I contend that there is for Schilder no such a thing as a clear line between church and world, between Christian culture and non-Christian culture. The world is a mixed place where Christian true culture and anti-christian culture are intertwined and cannot be properly distinguished. This is what he argued, as well as the position he defended when his ideas were put to the test (section 5.3).

Schilder had a number of reasons for this position. First, there may be no such notions of commonness as common grace, and yet this does not mean that the world is utterly dark. God restrains both his judgment and his grace. The world has not become hell yet, there is a 'common temperance' there. The demarcating lines will only become clear after the eschaton. Moreover, while the remnants of the good creation are not substantial enough to build upon, Schilder does not deny their presence. Secondly, Schilder has a pneumatological restriction. Although they are undeveloped, Schilder makes numerous references to the Spirit's work outside of the church. God is not limited to the church. Third, Schilder has a strong eschatological restriction. He is far from optimistic about the church and the results of Christian culture. These are truncated pyramids, and everything is tainted by sin. While there is indeed progressive revelation, there is also the increasing eschatological tension which hinders and ultimately blocks the development of Christian culture. Schilder understood his time, especially during and after the two world wars, as the end times. At that point, he introduces the abstinence option: Withdrawal is disobedience, although it is necessary to set priorities, especially in eschatological times. On repeated occasions, I noted the absence of concrete indications for cultural

⁵It is remarkable how few of those who have written on Schilder's ecclesiology have noted this central feature. Buys, Dee, Batteau, and Smit write about Schilder's ecclesiology but miss this, in my view, core element. Others have called the attention for the earth, for creation, the heart of Schilder's thought (Van Minnen, Jager, and Van Bekkum). See 4.4 for a broader discussion and references.

⁶Such was also the verdict of Hepp, Noordmans, Van Ruler, and, in a different way, of Smit (section 3.4.1 and 4.3.2).

engagement in Schilder's oeuvre, and, as we saw in the final chapter, Schilder hesitated to become the leader of the newly formed church. He was accused of constructing an isolated Christian culture, but that charge was more properly applied to Kuyper's ecclesiology than to Schilder's. The organizational endeavor of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* drew greater inspiration from Kuyper than their own spiritual leader. Schilder did not found newspapers, schools, or organizations, nor did he set any such thing in motion. Schilder had no cultural program, but intended to inspire simple everyday life, so as to add the hue of the gospel, of Christ, to the mundane realities of church life, the elder's work, and the plumber's labor.

The church is the instrument, the hub in the cultural mandate. But how does that work?

For Schilder, the church should not engage directly, but only indirectly. The Kuyperian spheres keep their proper sovereignty. The church preaches the Word and administers the sacraments. If it does so faithfully, through its members it will radiate out into the world. Schilder criticizes the Kuyperian distinction between the church as organism and institution, and yet the notion of the church as humanity made it difficult for him to abandon the organic nature of the church altogether. He had abandoned the Kuyperian notion on the grounds that the church is only the institution. Calling what is outside of the institution 'church' is, in Schilder's eyes, confusing. This creates a certain lack of clarity in the definition of the church, and conflicts with his wish for a concrete and visible church. The idea of the organic church remains in place, however, even though Schilder uses the term 'kingdom' for what Kuyper identifies as the organic church. Not surprisingly, the kingdom is therefore closely tied to the church (section 4.3.4).

How exactly the church is to shape its members does not become any clearer in Schilder's theology than the classical Reformed triplet he evokes of sermon, sacraments, and discipline. What it does imply is that he saw the church as the liturgy. That is where it all comes down to. And the liturgy is the instrument for equipping its participants according to God's Word for their tasks in the world. It is here that Schilder's early remarks on church language, the Psalms, and art in worship have their place (section 2.3.1). The same is true of his advocacy for salvation-historical preaching, combined with his own commitment to preaching. Schilder was a famous preacher, and could be found on the pulpit every Sunday. That he was relatively silent on other liturgical issues can be explained by the fact that the sermon was considered the heart of the liturgy. Schilder was a word/Word-theologian, and all other liturgical expressions were approached with a certain suspicion for their subjective character.

For Schilder, the Reformed confession was the point of connection between

the church and its members. The members had all individually and publicly confessed their adherence to this confession, and the significance of that confession did not stop for Schilder at the threshold of the church: it pertained to all of life. Although the church remained confined to its own sphere, Schilder subtly bolstered ecclesial authority by putting forward the confession. Kuyper had always spoken about Reformed principles, not the confession, as undergirding the spheres. As such, Schilder proposed a solution for the problem that had confronted Kuyper, in that the identification of those Reformed principles always remained unclear. In a certain sense, however, the problem had now only shifted. For how was the confession to be connected to the work of a lawyer, for instance? Schilder provided no help in answering this question. At times, however, he did show by example how this could work in particular circumstances. For example, he demonstrated that the confession was opposed to National Socialist ideology, with consequences for daily life under the German occupation (section 4.3.5).

The engagement of the church's members with the world includes Christian organizations. Schilder defended the right and necessity of such organizations repeatedly, and polemicized with Barthians who opposed them. For Schilder and his fellow neo-Calvinists, Christian organizations were the necessary result of concrete Christian life outside of the church. These organizations were for him connected to the church by the confession. The link to the church was never to be direct. Schilder never opposed cooperation with people from other churches as a matter of principle. Even after the *Vrijmaking*, he maintained a realist position, and for the most part it was the biographically determined 'ethical conflict' that proved problematic for Schilder (5.3.2). When Schilder opposed inter-ecclesial activity, he did so only when the church itself was concerned, not cooperation outside of it. Furthermore, as noted above, Schilder was never programmatic in or optimistic about achievements of Christian culture. The emphasis lay on the obligation to engagement as such, not on the results. Schilder even expected a diminishing Christian culture as the apocalypse drew near. Thus, the church is visible and has an address, Christian culture is sometimes discernible, but often mixed and invisible: it is matter of faith. True fellowship of Christians (*koinonia*) and cooperation in reality (*sunousia*) are interwoven (4.3.2 and 5.3.2).

6.1.5 The Nature of the Church

We have now seen that the history of creation and fall prove to be defining in explaining the framework in which the church has to be understood. It is within this framework that we can now turn to see how Schilder understands the nature of the church as the essential, objective pivot for unfolding the cultural mandate.

As we saw, essential to the unfolding of the cultural mandate is participation in the restoration of Christ, the second Adam. Accordingly, the central question in this section is: What does this relationship of the church with Christ look like? How is the church connected to Christ its head? Schilder offers two answers to this question: the dynamic church, and the institutional church. The side of the answer that receives most attention in Schilder's writings is the church as a visible, concrete institution. Christ gathers his church, so Schilder understands from the Heidelberg Catechism. Church is a gathering. That makes it into a concrete and *visible reality*. Therefore, Schilder distances himself from the notion of the invisible church as it has been developed in the Reformed tradition. The church is the visible reality of people who come together around Word and Sacrament (section 4.2.2).

How is the visible church related to salvation? If the church is not the invisible body of believers of all times and places, how can the church truly be those who are 'in Christ', the circle of the covenant? Schilder distinguishes between covenant and church on the one hand, and election and salvation on the other, without separating them entirely. Ultimately church/covenant and salvation/election are identical; this identification is an eschatological reality. By definition, the covenant does not include all those who are saved, because it is unfinished. Some who will be saved are not yet born and thus not yet a part of the covenant. Election is a hidden reality and is only known to God himself. The church and the covenant are realities of the present, they concern us. There can, however, also be people in the covenant who will ultimately not be saved. Thus, the circles of covenant and election do not currently overlap, but one day they will indeed overlap. The "*nulla salus extra ecclesiam*" is eschatologically true. In this way, Schilder manages to uphold the sovereignty of God in that he is not confined to the church, a major accent of the Reformation. However, his emphasis does fall on the importance of the visible church. This is underlined when Schilder suggests that being part of the church itself is among the benefits of salvation. In other words, salvation is not about "going to heaven or not", it is about present participation in God's grace. In that respect as well, there is no salvation outside of the church or the covenant (section 4.2.4 and 4.2.3). This is reflected in Schilder's doctrine of God, for whom our time is a continuous present. God sees the entirety of history all at once. In God there is no distinction between the present day church and the future state of bliss (section 4.3.1). As will become evident in the next section, salvation primarily means that humanity's original office is restored, the afterlife is *for now* secondary.

The church is thus a visible reality and, though distinguished, intimately connected to salvation. Now we can turn to the relationship of the visible church with Christ, its invisible head. Schilder seeks to cast this connection in objective

terms. This is to be understood against the backdrop of both the subjective pietism in his church and the competing secular worldviews in the wake of the First World War. Just as our knowledge of God finds its anchor in a perspicuous, inspired Holy Scripture (section 3.1.2), so the church is another objective anchor. These anchors are not disconnected: The church finds its veracity in its adherence to the Word of God (section 3.3.1), as Schilder himself often states. One cannot maintain that the doctrine of revelation defines Schilder's view of the church.⁷ The relationship between ecclesiology and revelation is not that straightforward. As a consequence of his strong emphasis on the *praesentia salutis*, the concrete presence of God in history also governs revelation. The church has a role in interpreting the Bible over against subjective mysticism. Schilder also stresses the continued character of revelation and its progress, calling the church fathers 'church children'. They were 'children' because they stood at the beginning of God's continuing revelation in history; today we know more than they did. The church and its confession have for Schilder an epistemic, revelatory function, despite his claims to the contrary. His pursuit of objectivity amidst competing secular worldviews put Schilder on this 'Roman Catholic' trajectory. The concrete church is indeed the indispensable hub of life and its restoration in Christ; it is almost as crucial as the perspicuous Scriptures themselves.⁸ The doctrine of revelation, however, pushes the analysis towards a conclusion of more than just a tension.⁹ The matter is connected to the core of Schilder's theology: The immanence of God is realized in the congregation of the church. The church is Schilder's answer to Barth's transcendence (section 3.3.2).

The hallmark of the institution is, for Schilder, principally the confession of the church (section 3.3.2). These are the 'official papers' of the church, and they decide its nature as church or not-church. The confession is for Schilder an expression of what is found in Scripture. Like the covenant, the church is thus for Schilder a forensic reality. It is neither experience nor the faith of the members that are decisive for the church, but rather the official documents are of primary importance. The church is an institution, just like marriage and state. That is a legal reality (section 5.2.1). Marriage does not depend on the subjective experience of the couple; whether or not the partners love each other does not cancel the marriage. The very point of marriage is to create an institutional, legal reality that transcends subjective experience. That also applies to the church.

⁷Buys, *Sodat hulle een kan wees*, pp. 29, 60.

⁸Stellingwerff is, as far as I know, the only one who has hinted at this inverted relation between church and revelation (Stellingwerff, "Kritiek op K. Schilder als filosoferend dogmaticus."). Buys only wants to go so far as to note a problematic tension in Schilder on this point (Buys, *Sodat hulle een kan wees*, p. 57).

⁹Kuitert, *De mensvormigheid Gods*, pp. 107-118.

This is not to say faith and love are not important, but they are not specific to the church. The church as institution with a confession is thus what makes the church the church of Christ. Schilder also pays attention to the confession's actual application. This confession should be living in that its content is reflected in sermons and in church discipline. A good example of such an application in discipline is Schilder's defence of the 1936 synod's ban on membership in the National Socialist Party. At the same time, he reproached other denominations for having a confession without applying it.

It is in this line that Schilder speaks about the lawful church. It was in the context of the *Vrijmaking* in particular that this aspect became very prominent. The lawful church was closely associated with the notion of the true church as found in the Belgic Confession. Since Schilder had distanced himself from the invisible church, this suggested a complete identification of the lawful and the true church. Schilder, however, shunned applying the notion of true church to a concrete (his own) church. After the schism, however, he did draw the two closer together. Earlier Schilder had called the true church a matter of 'universal tendency'. He spoke of the true church as a mandate, rather than an asset, entirely in line with his dynamic ecclesiology (section 4.2.5 and 5.2.2).

The confession as a hallmark of the true church is related to the historical character of the institution. The confession also connects the church to its history. Nevertheless, the confession is always subject to correction from the Word of God, just as the institution is always subject to change (the dynamic aspect). It is nonetheless characteristic of the church that it is a historical institution. This is again an expression of the presence of God in history. For Schilder, salvation history and church history are not essentially different. God still connects himself to history and to human beings. Just as God spoke authoritatively through Abraham and Paul, so he speaks today in the church. Once again, the church has an epistemic function. Under the Word of God, the historical institution and its confession play a role in human knowledge of God.

In his emphasis on the church as a historical institution, Schilder also advances the communal nature of the church as vital to its essence. He repeatedly makes this explicit and connects it with the desire for community he saw around him as manifested in the many gatherings that are not also "congregated" by God (section 3.2). Furthermore, the institution, the shared confession, and the historical nature of the church are all communal categories. This recalls the way the covenant, which is a communal notion, becomes a key category in Schilder's thought. The community does not take precedence over the objective realities of the historical institution and its confession for fear of subjectivity. Schilder keeps his distance from Schleiermacher (section 1.2).

This was the first part of Schilder's answer to the question of the church's

relationship to Christ. This relationship is, so to speak, secured by the objective notion of the historical and visible institution with an official confession according to the perspicuous Word of God. The only way to return to the original mandate and to participate in the restoration in Christ is through the institutional church.

The second part of Schilder's answer to the church's relationship to Christ is what has been called the *dynamic aspect*.¹⁰ What we have seen thus far is only half of the story. The church has the shape of an institution that is connected to a confession and a history and, in them, to Christ. This institution is far from static. Because Christ is its head, it is a continuous dynamic. That even applies to the confession: If a new insight in Scripture demands a change in the confession, it should be made. The church has to go where Christ goes. The most important consequence is that the church can never rest or become complacent. Just as the covenant is like a prod that stirs the believer, so the church is also continuously pressed to move and to choose. While the notions of confession and institution are of considerable importance, they are never something to appeal to or rely on. The institution of the church is never the church for what it has in itself. The institution is never complacent. This element is reminiscent of Schilder's early critical ecclesiology. The church is only the church by virtue of a living connection to Christ. Schilder applies this insight mainly in two directions.

The first call is that of the church's unity. Without a doubt, Schilder's concern for the unity of the church was what occupied him most. Given the above, this unity is understood in visible, institutional terms. This is how Schilder read John 17, as a demand for institutional unity. From this starting point, Schilder criticized the Kuyperian idea of the pluriformity of the church as it was promoted in his churches. This notion implied that the institutional division of the church was not a problem, but rather a reflection of the pluriform nature of God himself. Unity, so it was held, may be the ideal, but it is not attainable due to the consequences of sin. Here Schilder appealed to the church's dynamic nature: The church should continuously strive for institutional unity. It should never forget that it follows the living Christ and his kingdom. Acquiescing in division is unthinkable if Christ demands and works towards unity. All believers who share their confession of Christ can only want to be together in one church.

The second application pertains to the internal dynamic of the church. If the church is a dynamic entity that is continuously moving, it is to be expected that debate and polemics will characterize the church. In the continuous struggle to follow Christ, such things as disagreement, serious debate, and polemics are

¹⁰First as criticism by Richel, *Het kerkbegrip van Calvijn*, pp. 96-73, then positively by Berkouwer, *De Kerk 1*, pp. 19-23 (*ET* Berkouwer, *The Church*, pp. 19-23), Dee, *Schilder oecumenicus*, pp. 124-132, 189-191, and Buys, *Sodat hulle een kan wees*, p. 285.

signs of a healthy church. Schilder famously expressed it as follows: "Whoever does not polemicize, is not converted." Polemics were a matter of principle for Schilder, and he himself practised this arduously. Far from judging his conversation partners, Schilder believed that this intellectual sharpening served the search for the truth and the church's faithfulness. His polemics with Barth and Kuiper need also to be considered within this perspective. A clear expression of this concern can likewise be found in his view on the churches that followed him in the schism. For Schilder feared a church of likeminded people who excluded diverging opinions, and he explicitly warned against such tendencies: The suppression of polemics makes the church into a static entity, risking the loss of its connection to the living Christ.

As noted above, the dynamic element in the church also accounts for the modern, Kierkegaardian notion of the individual's responsibility. This responsibility includes participating in debate to ensure that the church remains true in its nature. It includes the study of Scripture, and does not shrink back from starting procedures to change the church's confession. It also includes reflection on the question whether God is calling you to another church when your own church has fallen beyond repair. Although it is unclear when that point has been reached, this line of thought as such is clearly present in Schilder. The lack of clarity on this question may in fact be the clearest expression of Schilder's tension between the dynamic and institutional church. During and after the schism, that question became an increasingly prominent one: Every member of the Reformed church was under the (Kierkegaardian) obligation, according to Schilder, to liberate himself from the synod's decision. The dynamic of the church means that one can never complacently rely on the institution.

If we now cast Schilder's proposal in terms of the classic marks of the church, we on the one hand perceive a concern for its apostolicity and sanctity, expressed in what I called the static institutional element. This is Schilder's emphasis on the church's relation to Christ. The notion of apostolicity in particular adequately covers Schilder's concern for the historical institution. On the other hand, there is his concern for the church's unity and catholicity, expressed in the dynamic motif and in his notion of the church as ultimately instrumental to the cultural mandate. The church has to be one and reflect the full breadth of creation, and it must engage with God's creation, the world. Since the sanctity and apostolicity of the church are ultimately instrumental to its catholicity, Schilder's ecclesiology can best be characterized as a relentless pursuit of the catholicity of the church against the tides of secularization.

6.1.6 Tensions in Schilder's Thought

The previous chapters used two tensions as important markers to describe Schilder's thought. Now that his main answer to the question has been given, the tensions hidden in that narrative can be further explored.

Dynamic or Institutional? The first tension is that between the dynamic and the institutional aspects of the church. This tension runs like a thread through his works. The first pole is represented by the church as a fixed, historical, and visible institution with a confession. This is a legal reality: The official documents decide what is the lawful church, and where Christ is gathering his people. There is only one visible church that is the true church. Outside of this church there is no salvation. What is more, this church is itself part of what salvation means. Without this church, obedience to God's original mandate is lost and any hope of Christian culture forsaken. The world is full of secular ideologies that know perfectly well what they teach and who is in or out, and the church ought to provide that same clarity. The distinct character of the church is vital. The church of Christ has one address and one confession.

Yet there is also the dynamic element where Christ as its head gathers the church, just like water is gathered in a river meandering through history. The church is a pneumatological reality that goes beyond the borders of the institution. The distinct nature of the church is not a man-made reality: It is Christ who is the head of the church. That makes the church open-ended: There is always room for more to join, and the *nulla salus* pertains to the eschatological church. The one true church is a universal tendency that seems almost like a dialectical eschatological reality. The church is always becoming. Every Sunday again one must ask: is my church still the true church? It is the continuous pursuit of unity that characterizes the church, that unity is never a given. The church has a confession, but should always engage in polemical debate to sharpen the truth according to the revelation in Scripture. A uniform church can never be a church; the church must represent the variety of creation.

This may be something of a caricature of the poles in Schilder's thought, but the above is in its entirety still composed of more or less literal quotes from his oeuvre. Two very different pictures can therefore be drawn. The reception of Schilder's thought confirms this polarity, as the two sides that emerged from the schism that took place within the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* in 1967 are representative of these two lines of interpretation. Already in the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* of Schilder's own lifetime, his students tended to push towards the static pole, forcing Schilder himself to nuance it with dynamic emphases. Theoretically the tension in Schilder's thought may be reconciled,

but history has shown how difficult it is to maintain a balance in the tension in practice.

A theoretical resolution is indeed possible. Schilder himself saw no tension between these two poles. For him, they were part of the tension of the covenant, of the life of a Christian (section 3.3.3). The tension was one between divine act and human co-activity. For him, the resolution must be sought in one's vision of the static and historical institution as the contemporary expression of the dynamic church. The tension is ultimately resolved in the doctrine of God as described in section 4.3.1. God sees all things as a continuous present. In him the static and dynamic are resolved: they are one and the same church. Today the true and lawful church is in one concrete place, but tomorrow that place may differ, and so too the church's confession may have changed. The flow of history is a continuous becoming, but in God it is all one. In this way, Schilder can say that the church is concrete and visible, but at the same time also dynamic and open-ended.

The tension between the dynamic and the static in Schilder's ecclesiology is also reflected in that other tension, between the individual and the communal. This same tension is found in Schilder's doctrine of the covenant (section 4.2.3). On the one hand, the church is communal and covenantal. In its communal character, the church finds its distinct character: God congregates a catholic church of different people. On the other hand, Schilder emphasizes a strong individual responsibility for members of the human race. This is part of the central tension in Schilder's theology between human responsibility and divine sovereignty that has seen wide debate.¹¹ In the church this tension comes to concrete realization in the question whether the church is an authority to which the believer must submit, or whether the believer must decide every Sunday again whether or not that church is still the true church. On the one hand, the historical confession of the church is essential for interpreting the Bible; on the other hand, the church should approach the truth more closely through continuous polemics.

Church as the new humanity? A second tension I have noted repeatedly is that between the church as God's new humanity, and the church as the narrow

¹¹Strauss concludes that "there are undoubtedly two lines in his thought. On the one hand, he reasons strongly from God's (eternal) counsel that it damages the decisive character of the deeds (in history). ...On the other hand, there is the line where God's historical deeds are rooted in his eternal counsel without letting this foundation rob history of its character as a true meeting place between God and humanity." (Strauss, *Alles of niks*, p. 197). Veldhuizen writes: "There is a tension between covenant and election, history and *pactum salutis*, time and eternity, human responsibility and divine freedom." (Veldhuizen, *God en mens onderweg*, p. 339). See also Berkouwer, *Zoeken en vinden*, p. 259.

institution on Sunday. This tension has its place in the second part of my main question, namely the nature of the church's engagement. At times Schilder writes of the church as restricted to its own sphere, to preaching, to sacraments, and, sometimes, to church discipline. The church is not to interfere directly in the other spheres of life, where it only has indirect jurisdiction through the confession. The church is visible, not invisible. The church is institution, not organism. On other occasions, however, we find Schilder writing about the church as God's new humanity. This is most evident in his rather unique vision on the church as dating back to before creation, and extending to the eschaton. The fact that Schilder was ambiguous on these early roots affirms the evident tension there. The church as God's humanity suggests that the church is the entire Christian life, and that the activity of the new humanity is certainly more than just a Sunday gathering.

This tension represents more than an academic quibble. Once again, that becomes clear in the concrete practice of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)* and the concerns Schilder voiced. In the debate on the 'ongoing reformation' in the 1950s, the question was whether the schism within the church should also have consequences for the organizations outside of the church. For Schilder, such consequences were not strictly necessary, thereby confirming the emphasis on the narrow view of the church. In practice, however, the so-called 'ethical conflict' made continued cooperation in the organizations impossible, such that the ramifications of the ecclesial schism extended well beyond the church alone. The pivot here is the confession. As noted above, the confession is the link between the church and the other spheres. The lack of clarity in Schilder's proposal on this topic numbers among the causes for the great deal of polemics and in-fighting that could be seen in the young churches that followed him (section 5.3.2). This tension between the broad and narrow church resides at the heart of Schilder's views on its engagement.

In my summary above, I took the narrow church as the starting point. That is because Schilder is most explicit about one pole of the tension, that is, the narrow church. As discussed extensively in section 4.3.4, the notion of community somewhat alleviates the tension, since it makes the church broader than just the weekly Sunday worship service that it sometimes seems to be. That Schilder called the church God's new humanity was born from a desire to show how far the church is to be identified with the world and is never to become a secluded sect. Schilder's claims in this direction are to a certain extent to be read as rhetorical; they serve to stress a specific point he is trying to get across. Another explanation is that Schilder due to his vehement rhetoric against 'scholastic' distinctions really could not afford to use a distinction in his ecclesiology, even though that would have been helpful here. Kuyper's notion of

the organic church is the distinction he needs. But any definition of church that separates it from the concrete and visible institution would have undermined one of the essential emphases of Schilder's own ecclesiology. This tension shows how difficult it was to define the church so narrowly without losing its potential cosmic impact and ending 'in a slum'. This difficult balancing act does bring us right to the heart of what Schilder's vision was: A concrete and visible institutional church that is aware of its instrumentality in God's sovereign rule over his world.

6.2 Questions for Hauerwas

Having summarized the principal conclusions of the present study, I can now come back full circle to the introductory chapter. As was made clear there, the goal of this study is not to offer a comparison with the thought of Stanley Hauerwas. Its purpose rather was to explore the view on the relationship between the church and the world of the neo-Calvinist theologian Klaas Schilder. This question was, however, not asked in a vacuum. I came to Schilder in the awareness of the ecclesial turn in contemporary theology. Hauerwas was selected as one of the main representatives of this turn and his thought and the problems it raised were explored. This survey provided this study with questions that offered a possibility not only to explore Schilder's thought historically, but also to connect it to contemporary concerns. The final step I will now take is to substantiate this connection. I propose to do so by returning to Hauerwas with a number of questions that have arisen from our study of Schilder, and to draw a line to the problems in Hauerwas's account as was described in chapter 1. The purpose is therefore to close this study with a tentative conversation between Hauerwas and Schilder.

6.2.1 Revelation and Epistemology

Before turning to the question of the church and the world, a few initial steps need to be taken. A first important step is represented by the doctrine of revelation and several related epistemological questions. The first chapter showed that Healy and Stackhouse had raised questions in relation to Hauerwas's doctrine of Scripture. Closely related is the question of authority: If Scripture is not the final authority, who or what is? For Schilder as well, the question of revelation proved to be key in determining his ecclesiology.

To Schilder's mind, the doctrine of revelation centers around Scripture. Scripture is the revealed Word of God. It has an objective character: it, and it alone, is the objective point of reference for knowledge of God. The church is defined by its obedience to Scripture. If the church is unfaithful to Scripture,

it is no longer church. The church has a confession, but that confession must always be 'sync'd' with Scripture. Schilder therefore answers the question of authority with a reference to the objective reality of Scripture as the revelation of God. In the authority of Scripture, the church finds its authority – under the Word, so to speak.

As such, Schilder echoes the concerns raised by Healy and Stackhouse. Without a doctrine of Scripture as an objective point of reference, the community of the church is up in the air. Why would anyone go to a random group reading a random ancient text? This can only be answered by the *a priori* of Scripture by which the church is defined. For Hauerwas, the voice of God is only heard in the church, indirectly. For Schilder, God's voice is found directly in the holy Scriptures.

Behind this difference lies hidden also the distance of half a century and that of two diverging theological traditions. Hauerwas is a post-liberal, Schilder a neo-Calvinist, and as such they are worlds apart. Schilder operates within a modernist, foundationalist framework where the question of the objective truth is a high priority. This question is understood in a rational manner, where truth is a recognized concept. Hauerwas's approach is more postmodern in nature. He is not interested in such rational absolute truth claims. Hauerwas's Methodist background too may be playing a role here. In Methodism, experience has always been an important category next to Scripture.¹² Truth is much more a matter of practice, of lived reality. Understanding Scripture is for Schilder a matter of exegesis, for Hauerwas a matter of discipleship. What also separates Schilder and Hauerwas is the notion of narrativity. For Schilder this is an alien category, while for Hauerwas it is an essential one. For Schilder, Scripture refers to salvation history, to historical facts behind the text. Notwithstanding these differences in tradition, the question of authority, of a rationale for being a community around Scripture, is for both one that needs answering.

Moreover, the difference between Schilder and Hauerwas is less pronounced than a first impression may suggest. I have remarked that for Schilder the church becomes an epistemological category. Even for him, the Word is not merely an objective reality that hovers above the concrete community of the church. He would admit to Hauerwas, somewhat surprisingly and reluctantly, that Scripture can indeed not be read without that community. Like Hauerwas, Schilder puts forward the church, also as a community, as necessary to a correct interpretation of Scripture. Yet while for Hauerwas this is the starting point, for Schilder it represents more a secondary, nearly accidental element. Nevertheless, it still seems like Schilder realized that the church was somehow necessary in understanding Scripture. This was so far beyond his context and even his own

¹²Brink and Kooi, *Christelijke dogmatiek*, pp. 612-613.

theological framework that it could not develop and become a substantial notion in his thought. So too there is a difference between the two on the form ecclesial hermeneutics are to assume, as for Schilder this happens through the confession. The confession is the communal 'consensus', so to speak, which guides the reading of Scripture.

6.2.2 Creation and Commonness

A second step is the doctrine of creation. When it comes to the relationship between church and world, for both Schilder and Hauerwas the doctrine of creation proves to be pivotal. Hauerwas was fiercely criticized for a supposedly defective doctrine of creation. He readily admits that, in line with Barth, creation is only available through Christ. Hauerwas's critics are mostly concerned with the legibility of the church by the world, and whether any room is left for common ground.

At this point, the neo-Calvinist Schilder will disappoint Hauerwas's critics. Epistemologically, creation is indeed accessible only through Christ, so Schilder agrees, denying all notions of common ground. There is no natural theology, no common grace, and even no general revelation. Like Hauerwas, Schilder is not interested in the church's legibility. The gospel is foolishness to the Greeks, he often reminds his readers in quoting the apostle Paul. We can only go back to Adam by the last Adam. It is precisely on this point that Schilder departs from his neo-Calvinist forebears Kuyper (who influenced Stackhouse) and Bavinck – and approaches Barth (who is one of Hauerwas's influences). Where Kuyper and Bavinck still reasoned from the universal to the particular, Schilder, like Barth and Hauerwas, begins with the particular. It is from the particular categories of faith and church that the universal comes to be tabled.

Nevertheless, I do suspect a difference here between Schilder and Hauerwas in the way the universal then comes back. While Schilder acknowledges that creation is *now* not accessible without Christ, for him this is not a matter of principle. Without sin and the fall, access to creation would have been without a problem. Christ is only there because of sin. Creation is by way of principle common ground. Moreover, for Schilder creation is ontologically separate from Christ. Christ is for him only a means to restore what once was. This notion of restoration is alien to Hauerwas (and Barth). For Schilder, original creation, including the mandate, still stands as before. Christ only serves as a means to regain access to and restore the possibility of this original account. This difference, regardless of the practical application, implies a different basic structure in Schilder's and Hauerwas's respective views on the church's relationship to the world. The church is and remains the means, the world the purpose.

This different starting point with regard to creation is also reflected in Schilder's affirmation of what he calls common temperance and the reality of *sunousia*. Here Schilder shows that creation as a common starting point offers a certain amount of common ground, meagre though it may be. This is reflected in his awareness of the developments of history. History is still the place where God's sovereignty over the world is displayed. Even the trenches of the First World War and the camps of the Second World War are part of God's control that brings history to its apocalypse.

6.2.3 Institution

Having considered revelation as an important first step, and then creation as decisive for one's perspective on the world, we can now turn to the church itself. We have seen that for Schilder it is the institutional aspects of the church that are essential. The church is not primarily a community, as it is for Hauerwas, but, due to the structure of reality and the relationship between God and humanity, the church is first and foremost a legal reality. In many ways this is problematic. One example is Schilder's one-sided emphasis on the objective and legal character of not only the church, but also the covenant and thus the nature of the relationship with God. The great risk is that the inner heart of the relationship with God, its spirituality, is moved to the background for fear of subjective elements. It is not that Schilder believed spirituality to be unimportant, but he rather sought to objectify it. Schilder tried to develop a mysticism of doctrine. For him the inner part was an essential element, but his theology as it has come down to us fails to incorporate that sufficiently, especially from the 1930s onwards. The covenant, as well as the church, become a legal agreement. Human life comes to be marked by obedience to God's will, instead of love. Again, Schilder does mention love and fellowship, but they always come with caveats for fear of subjectivity. This ultimately risks alienating the church from the concrete lives of the people who form that church. Although this is the opposite of what Schilder intended, his hammering on the anvil of objectivity makes this a considerable risk.

Having said that, Schilder's emphasis on the concrete and visible institution of the church is an important question for Hauerwas in terms of two problems. The first is the authority question: What church is the true church? Who decides what church has epistemological authority? Especially when the church is burdened with epistemological primacy as well as the realization of salvation, as is the case with Hauerwas, this is a burning question. Schilder does provide an answer to this question with his emphasis on the historical institution as the legal church. The localization of this 'true' church is problematic given the vast number of church denominations. Yet this is where Schilder's notion of

the dynamic comes to our aid. The church is for him dynamic because the living Christ is her head. Thus the institution can never boast about being the 'true church' or become complacent, but must always ask herself whether it still follows the living Christ. It is in particular with regard to other churches that this thought is helpful. As long as the church is not one, it is unfinished and wanting. This combination allows one to be very serious about the authority of the local church, and yet also to acknowledge that the church is unfinished as long as it is not united in a single church. A local church can be identified as the legal church, but remains always open to becoming the true church in unity with other churches.

The second question where Schilder's institutional emphasis offers aid is the one that has been haunting Hauerwas for decades: 'Where is your church?' Is there a church that can bear the weight that Hauerwas gives it? A church that is the interpretative community that reads Scripture, embodies salvation, and shapes her participants into virtuous people – does that church exist? With Schilder, the weight is taken off the shoulders of the community itself and laid, at least partly, at the feet of the institution. The question of a faithful church is not in its members, but in the institution and its confession. While the heavy emphasis on the church remains in place, the question of its possibility is no longer valid. As we also saw, Schilder does not isolate the confession from the institution of the actual people. The confession has to be a living confession applied in ecclesial discipline. Schilder also found the notion of community important, although here too his objections to subjectivity kept him from fully developing this notion. Hauerwas would probably not be satisfied with this solution. The way Schilder emphasizes the institution is, in Hauerwas's terms, an abstraction of doctrine from ethics. For Hauerwas, the church is the community of virtues. The official documents of a church are therefore meaningless. In the background we find here the difference between the Anabaptist and the Calvinist playing a role again. For Schilder, sanctification is understood according to the Heidelberg Catechism: "In this life even the holiest have only a small beginning of this obedience."¹³ This is a classical dispute with Hauerwas's Anabaptist tradition, which emphasizes that holiness is an attainable goal in the Christian life, as taken to its extreme by John Wesley in the notion of Christian perfection.

These two answers that Schilder's emphasis on the institution have serve to make his ecclesiology more robust than Hauerwas's. This robustness, however, comes at the price of an unresolved tension in Schilder's thought (see the second tension in section 6.1.6). Schilder reduced the church, at least partly, to an institution. I noted that this was in tension with his broad notion of the church as God's humanity. It is this second pole of the tension that is more like Hauerwas,

¹³*Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord's Day 44, answer 114.

where the church is much broader than the institution with its liturgy, and is God's humanity that does live in the liturgy but is also in the world. Schilder too accounts for this mixed reality, but only in the realm outside of the church where *sunousia* is a fact of life.

6.2.4 Church and World

Having seen how the church is defined and creation is understood, we are now ready to turn to the goal of our inquiry, which is the church and the world. Both Hauerwas and Schilder articulate the necessity of a 'robust' church with clear boundaries from the world.¹⁴ We have seen that there is a difference in the shape of this church. Both also see no possibilities for common ground, although their views on creation differ. How does Schilder fit in Gustafson's critique of the 'sectarian temptation'?

We saw already that one searches in vain for common ground in Schilder's doctrine of creation. Even the classical Kuyperian notion of common grace is absent from his theology. If this is what Stackhouse, Gustafson, and Stout believe to be the only remedy against the sectarian temptation, Schilder does not offer much help. There is, however, more to say.

I have emphasized throughout how for Schilder the church is ultimately a means to an end: the world. The church is the hearth from where the blaze goes out into the world. Not unlike Hauerwas, Schilder understands the liturgy of Word and Sacrament as the heart of the church, shaping the participants. For both the liturgy is instrumental to a formative end. At this point, however, they somewhat go their separate ways, as Hauerwas emphasizes the way the liturgy shapes the character of its participants and makes virtuous people of them. Such language is alien to Schilder, although he may actually mean something similar. Schilder does not elaborate on the 'how' of the formation of the church's members. He simply states that whatever they confess in the church pertains to everyday life. Here again, the emphasis is forensic, since Schilder insists that the members are bound by the confession. While Hauerwas stresses the ethical aspects with his notion of the virtues, Schilder's emphasis falls on the doctrine as expressed in the confession. The weakness we saw above in Schilder's theology in that he emphasizes the external and forensic aspects is reflected here in the way he understands the church-world relationship.

Schilder, however, does not stop at the formative function of the liturgy. For Hauerwas, nearly everything is said with the emphasis on the community of the church in the liturgy. The notion of witness is then central for Hauerwas, for whom 'the community of the church shows the world (as in not-church) that

¹⁴This is reflected, for example, in the title given to a collection of essays by Hauerwas translated into Dutch: S. Hauerwas. *Een robuuste kerk*. Boekencentrum, 2010.

it is the world' is a favorite expression. The ethical emphasis naturally leads to witness, and ultimately to martyrdom. Schilder's polemics with the Barthians on Christian organizations also mark a difference over against Hauerwas. Schilder emphasizes the concrete Christian presence in everyday life. There is a web of organizations around the church, including schools and political parties, and even Christian art. Here we recognize Schilder's emphasis on the *praesentia salutis* and on creation. If this is not concrete, it will disappear. In this more concrete application, Hauerwas and Schilder share an ethical emphasis. For Hauerwas, the focus remains on the posture, the virtues. Concrete applications always center on his pacifism: The state and its violence is the heart of the problem. For Schilder, the ethical has to find its expression in concreteness, which serves to explain the Christian organizations with their ties to the church through the confession. Here too Schilder betrays a nineteenth-century view on society that is alien to Hauerwas.

Again, the picture is actually somewhat more nuanced. Hauerwas fears Christian organizations as reminiscent of constantinianism. He may be right that views such as Schilder's still carry an unwanted (Kuyperian) Christendom-heritage as part of their baggage. Hauerwas also echoes Barth's fear of triumphalism in Christian organizations, but wants the church's witness to pertain to all areas of life. At the same time, Schilder does show himself to have many Hauerwasian emphases. While he defends Christian organizations and politics, he is not the instigator of a *corpus Christianum*. His sole focus is on the church and often comes close to what Hauerwas calls witness and even martyrdom. Schilder's focus is not on the construction or results, but on the obedience itself. As such, Schilder's notion of obedience and Hauerwas's concept of witness end up approaching each other closely.

Is, then, the difference I noted in their respective views of creation obsolete? Does Schilder offer no aid in avoiding the sectarian temptation? I believe he does. Schilder's core conviction that the church is ultimately restored humanity, and that the purpose of the church is the world, finds no expression in Hauerwas. For Hauerwas the church is ultimately an end in itself and serves the world by being itself. Schilder agrees, although the purpose remains the cultural mandate. It is not that Hauerwas says that being in the world is unimportant, for the very opposite is true. In that sense, the accusation Gustafson voiced against Hauerwas is not justified. Hauerwas's withdrawal pertains to the state and its violence. For Schilder, however, the church remains instrumental due to his emphasis on creation. This is an important safeguard against 'sectarianism'. It constantly reminds the church that its purpose lies in the cultural mandate. Although the history of the Schilderian churches has shown how difficult it is to maintain the balance between a 'robust church' and its instrumentality,

Schilder's emphasis is an essential reminder of the church's role. Thus, Schilder more than Hauerwas sanctifies everyday life and the web of Christian endeavour in the world as the ultimate Christian life, where the church is only instrumental. Schilder's emphasis on the outward, forensic aspect of faith, even if problematic, is also helpful in realizing a concrete *præsentia salutis* in God's creation.

6.2.5 In Sum

Is Klaas Schilder a Reformed Hauerwas? Do his views contribute to the contemporary reflection on the relationship between the church and the world? Schilder does indeed offer much that finds echoes in Hauerwas's ecclesial turn. The church is the heart of the Christian life and the heart of theology. Facing a secularized world, the church is turned into the center of gravity. Without a robust church, there is no future for Christianity.

Schilder therefore offers an ecclesiology that is more robust, in the sense that the key is the institution with its confession, creating room—more than Hauerwas—for doctrine and belief, rather than practices alone. This takes the weight off the moral quality of the church, which is certainly no triviality in the light of the church's contemporary challenges with regard to sexual abuse, for example. What Schilder does is also a typically Reformed alteration of an Anabaptist ecclesial turn. And while Schilder's institution is robust, it is never complacent but always self-critical. This self-critical function is in turn connected to its relationship to Scripture as the church's 'counterpart'. Schilder's church is also more robust in its relationship to Scripture and revelation. While the church's role in epistemology is not ignored, Scripture remains an objective reality that stands over against the church. This helps in offering an answer to the problem of authority.

When it comes to the church's relationship to the world, Schilder more than Hauerwas offers an impetus to understand the church always as instrumental for God's plan with the world. While Schilder is on the Barthian side of the 'Nein' to commonness, he rejects a purely christological approach. Christ is the restoration of what once was, but without Christ creation is no longer accessible. This creational starting point allows for a realistic view on cooperation with unbelievers and on God's common temperance. It also ensures that the Christian can never be content to be in church with the shutters closed, as it were. She always knows that she is called to be out there. 'Out there' does not mean that she has to engage in pacifist rallies, or participate in ambitious programs for the re-Christianization of Europe. It means that the purpose of her life is not found in singing psalms and listening to sermons, but in doing the hard daily work of Excel sheets and programming, of hospitals and classrooms, of meetings and

politics, of landscaping and baking bread. The church is the means, the world is the end.

Nederlandse samenvatting

Titel: De kerk is het middel, de wereld het doel: de ontwikkeling van het denken van Klaas Schilder over de relatie tussen de kerk en de wereld.

Vragen bij de wending naar de kerk

De centrale vraag van dit onderzoek luidt: *Hoe ziet Klaas Schilder (1890-1952) de kerk als tegelijk onderscheiden van en betrokken op de wereld?* Deze vraag is ingegeven door een hedendaagse discussie in het domein van de publieke theologie waarin zich de afgelopen decennia een zogenaamde wending naar de kerk aftekende. De centrale figuur in deze wending naar de kerk is de Amerikaanse ethicus Stanley Hauerwas (1940). Op spraakmakende wijze zette Hauerwas vanaf de jaren 80 het debat op scherp door met kracht de vervlochtenheid tussen kerk en wereld te bekritisieren. Hauerwas, pacifist en Mennoniet, pleit ervoor om die banden radicaal door te snijden. Hij benadrukt de eigenheid van de kerk als een aparte gemeenschap, een eigen 'polis', die met de natie niets van doen heeft. Hauerwas' pleidooi kreeg veel bijval, ook op Nederlandse bodem, maar tegelijk ook stevige kritiek. Beroemd is de kritiek van zijn leermeester James Gustafson (1925) die Hauerwas al vroeg betichtte van het toegeven aan de sektarische verleiding die de kerk met de rug naar de wereld zet. Gustafson wees als oorzaak op het ontbreken van een scheppingsleer bij Hauerwas. Deze kritiek bleef Hauerwas decennia achtervolgen, maar ook andere zorgen kwamen op tafel: was Hauerwas' kerk eigenlijk wel realistisch, kwam er niet veel te veel druk op de kerk? En van Rooms-Katholieke zijde (Nicholas Healy) worden vraagtekens gezet bij het sociologische startpunt van Hauerwas' ecclesiologie: is dit wel theologisch genoeg? Zijn we met Hauerwas niet gewoon terug bij Schleiermacher: die in zijn denken over de kerk begon bij de sociale realiteit? Het is met deze vragen in het achterhoofd dat in dit proefschrift de gedachtegang

van de Nederlandse gereformeerde theoloog Klaas Schilder wordt bevraagd. Het aanvoeren van Schilder in deze discussie komt niet uit de lucht vallen. In de Verenigde Staten staat op het gebied van de publieke theologie de Nederlands neocalvinistische traditie volop in de belangstelling. Deze levert daar een wezenlijke bijdrage aan het debat. Dominant is daar de stem van Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) met zijn unieke oeuvre op dit gebied. Kuyper en Hauerwas worden in die discussie vaak tegenover elkaar gezet. De Kuyperianen vertegenwoordigen dan een lijn die meer welwillend is ten opzichte van de wereld, terwijl de Hauerwasianen meer anabaptistisch de wereld mijden. Schilder behoort tot de centrale denkers van het Nederlandse neocalvinisme van de tweede generatie in de eerste helft van de twintigste eeuw. Schilder denkt nadrukkelijk door in de lijn van Kuyper, maar deed dat in een totaal andere culturele context: het Europa van na de Eerste Wereldoorlog. Juist de vragen van de publieke theologie naar de relatie tussen de kerk en de wereld stonden hernieuwd op de agenda van de kerk. De secularisatie begon echt voet aan de grond te krijgen in Europa en de eerste signalen van wat nu werkelijkheid is geworden tekenden zich af: de kerk zou een marginale minderheid worden. Net als Hauerwas zet ook Schilder de kerk centraal in zijn theologie. De kerk is zijn antwoord op de secularisering, en tegelijk staat Schilder stevig op neocalvinistische bodem. Het is om die reden dat twee belangrijke spelers in de voornoemde discussie, James K.A. Smith (1970) en Richard J. Mouw (1940) wijzen op het werk van Klaas Schilder als potentieel belangrijke bron voor de reflectie op publieke theologie en de rol van de kerk in de wereld. Is Schilder een gereformeerde Hauerwas?

Dit onderzoek richt zich daarom op de reflectie van Schilder op de rol van de kerk in de wereld. Om Schilders denken in beeld te krijgen volgen we de ontwikkelingsgang van zijn denken door vier periodes in zijn leven. Schilders contextuele manier van schrijven vraagt om zo'n benadering: Schilder schreef zelden systematisch, maar was altijd betrokken op wat speelde en reageerde daar dan polemisch op. Deze benadering van naar de opvolgende periodes kijken is te meer van belang omdat voorgaande studies naar Schilders denken zo'n historische aanpak ontberen. De nu volgende paragrafen geven een samenvatting van de opeenvolgende hoofdstukken van het proefschrift.

Het begin: 1890 tot 1925

Een aantal factoren in Schilders jeugd en opleiding zijn van belang om hem goed te begrijpen. Ten eerste kwam Schilder uit een arm milieu en was zijn leven zelf een sociale emancipatie zoals die voor zijn tijd kenmerkend was. Ten tweede is Schilders opleiding aan de gereformeerde Theologische School in Kampen zeer bepalend geweest. Ten derde is de neiging tot neerslachtigheid en eenzaamheid die in Schilders studententijd duidelijk naar voren komen van belang. Ten

vierde is daar in 1914 de uitbraak van de Eerste Wereldoorlog, die samenviel met Schilders bevestiging als predikant. De oorlog had een ongekeende impact op de Westerse cultuur, ook op Schilders gereformeerde wereld en zijn theologische ontwikkelingsgang.

Met behulp van Schilders eigen begrippenpaar van diepte en breedte biedt dit hoofdstuk vervolgens de contouren van zijn denken zoals dat uit zijn geschriften naar voren komt. De diepte heeft betrekking op de innerlijke verdieping en omvat zaken als Gods concrete eschatologische handelen in de geschiedenis, de schriftleer en in deze periode ook nadrukkelijk de ontwikkeling van een gereformeerde spiritualiteit. De kerk komt ook in beeld, maar is nog geen duidelijk aandachtspunt voor Schilder. In deze periode is ook de *praesentia salutis* al goed te herkennen, die mijns inziens het centrale motief is van Schilders theologie. De breedte is het kuyperiaanse motief van de betrokkenheid op de wereld. Schilder houdt zich bezig met poëzie en de kunsten en ook de vraag naar de verhouding met de cultuur staat duidelijk op de agenda. In het begrippenpaar diepte en breedte zijn de twee elementen van de hoofdvraag van dit onderzoek te herkennen. De diepte: het onderscheiden karakter van de kerk en de breedte: haar betrokkenheid op de wereld. Dus hoewel de kerk nog geen centrale rol inneemt, worden de contouren van Schilders antwoord op de hoofdvraag al wel duidelijk.

In het algemeen bieden de geschriften uit de eerste jaren van Schilders predikantschap op verschillende plekken in het land nog geen afgerond geheel van gedachten. Toch worden de contouren van wat zich later zal ontwikkelen al wel goeddeels helder. De 'vroegere Schilder' van deze periode is wel eens afgezet tegen de latere Schilder. Dat is begrijpelijk: Schilder legt andere accenten, hij houdt zich bezig met kunst en literatuur, pleit voor vernieuwing van de taal van de kerk, algemene genade is nog onverdacht en van een nadruk op de kerk is nog geen sprake. Toch is mijn stelling dat bij Schilder consistentie de boventoon voert en dat er van twee Schilders geen sprake is. Veel meer is het verschil te verklaren uit een verleggen van de aandacht naar andere gebieden zonder daarmee zijn centrale theologische motieven te veranderen. De ontwikkelingen op het punt van algemene genade en de verbondsleer zijn meer een rijping van al bestaande accenten dan een echte verandering.

De wending naar de kerk: 1926-1934

Deze periode, die in het derde hoofdstuk centraal staat, wordt ingeluid door de synode van Assen van de *Gereformeerde Kerken*. De besluiten over het schriftgezag van deze synode werden door Schilder vurig verdedigd. Deze verdediging plaatste Schilder tegenover degene die zijn grootste tegenstander zou worden: Karl Barth. Barths theologie werd door Schilder gezien als ondermijning van

de traditionele openbaringsleer. Met Barths openbaringsleer is God onkenbaar en glipt de concrete *presentia salutis* ons uit de vingers. Deze confrontatie zet Schilder dan ook op het spoor van de kerk die vanaf nu een grote rol zal gaan spelen. De kerk is het brandpunt van de concrete aanwezigheid van God op aarde, de plek waar hij zijn heil uitdeelt.

Schilders kerkleer komt in deze periode echt tot ontwikkeling. De contouren van het huis beginnen zich duidelijk af te tekenen. Het begrippenpaar van breedte en diepte ontvouwt zich nu in de kerkleer: de kerk moet onderscheiden zijn met een eigen karakter, maar ook publiek, betrokken op de wereld.

Het onderscheiden karakter van de kerk zit hem voor Schilder in de relatie met Christus. Dat is het eigene aan de kerk: dat Christus haar vergadert. Voor Schilder uit zich dat in tastbare, objectieve elementen: het historische instituut van de kerk en haar belijdenis. Maar ook het gemeenschapskarakter van de kerk is belangrijk en krijgt zelfs een rol in het verstaan van de Schrift. Maar de kerk gaat niet in het statische op: juist door het koningschap van Christus blijft de kerk altijd dynamisch, zelfkritisch en op weg naar eenheid. De kerk moet steeds weer achter Christus aan. Wel blijft er tussen het dynamische en statische in Schilders ecclesiologie een zekere spanning die niet helemaal wordt opgelost.

Schilder doordenkt in deze periode ook steeds verder de verhouding tussen kerk en cultuur. Zijn afscheid van de algemene genade begint zich af te tekenen en hij benadrukt steeds meer de cultuur als opdracht. Bij de cultuur gaat het niet zozeer om wat er te genieten valt, maar om wat er gedaan moet worden. De kerk heeft daarin dan wel een centrale rol. Niet dat de kerk een directe rol moet spelen in de cultuur, maar, net als bij Kuiper, als de plaats waar de gelovigen worden toegerust. Dat laatste is waar het uiteindelijk om draait: de kerk is instrument voor het cultuurmandaat. Dit betekent voor Schilder niet dat er een aparte christelijke cultuur rondom de kerk moet zijn. Daarvoor denkt Schilder veel te weinig programmatisch. Het gaat hem veel meer om trouw in het dagelijks werk. Zo is de kerk het middel en de wereld het doel. Naast deze smalle opvatting van de kerk als instrument, staat een brede opvatting waarin Schilder de kerk als Gods nieuwe mensheid aanduidt. Ook hier bevindt zich weer een spanning tussen de kerk als de nieuwe schepping en het smalle instituut, dat bij Schilder steeds de nadruk krijgt.

Toenemende spanning: 1934-1944

In meerdere opzichten is deze periode er een van toenemende spanningen. De spanningen in de Nederlandse samenleving en in Europa in het algemeen nemen toe door de economische crisis en de opkomst van nationaal-socialisme en fascisme. Deze spanningen komen tot een climax met het uitbreken van de Tweede Wereldoorlog in 1939 en de bezetting van Nederland in 1940. Ook

binnen de *Gereformeerde Kerken* neemt de spanning toe: Schilder en consorten (met name de Reformatorische Beweging) komen steeds meer tegenover de gevestigde orde te staan. De polarisatie weerspiegelt zich ook in Schilders opvattingen: de retoriek richting Kuyper en de Kuyperianen wordt steeds feller en explicieter. De spanning komt midden in de oorlog tot een breuk binnen de *Gereformeerde Kerken* in 1944 waarbij Schilder met zo'n 10% van de leden een nieuw kerkverband vormt: de *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*.

Schilders denken verandert in deze periode niet zo sterk, maar verdiept zich. Om de metafoor van het huis te gebruiken: nu worden steeds details als de deuren, de vloeren, het behang zichtbaar. Een verrassende noviteit is het verbond. Dat verschijnt plotseling op het toneel en neemt meteen een centrale plek in Schilders denken in. Inhoudelijk verandert er niet veel: wat Schilder al zei over de kerk wordt nu toegepast op het verbond: de hoogspanning, de objectieve en forensische nadruk, het activisme. Zo worden kerk en verbond nauw geïdentificeerd, wordt spanning een hoofdkenmerk van het verbond en neemt Schilder afstand van het onderscheid tussen een inwendig en uitwendig verbond: dat staat het objectieve en concrete ervan in de weg. Ook benadrukt Schilder de eenheid van het verbond: het onderscheid tussen werk- en genadeverbond vervalst.

Ontwikkelingen zijn verder zichtbaar in de toegenomen polemieken met de Kuyperiaanse gevestigde orde. Dat gebeurt op het punt van het verbond: Schilders nadruk op de eenheid van het verbond botst op de klassieke onderscheidingen. Ook neemt Schilder nu expliciet afstand van de algemene genade, en ook van noties van algemene openbaring en de manier waarop de mens als beeld van God werd verstaan. Hier keert Schilder zich scherp van Kuyper en Bavinck af en beweegt zich parallel aan het ferme 'nein' van Barth tegen Brunner. Zo is Schilders denkgang in deze periode het beste te duiden als een navigeren tussen Kuyper en Barth. Enerzijds keert Schilder zich met Barth af van alle aanknopingspunten en noties van gemeenschappelijkheid, anderzijds blijft hij met Kuyper staan voor de immanentie van God in deze wereld en zijn sterke scheppingsmotief. Hier is het kernmotief van de *praesentia salutis* weer te herkennen. Op het punt van het onderscheiden karakter van de kerk zien we dus in deze periode vooral verdieping en verheldering. Verreweg de meeste aandacht vraagt Schilders kritiek op de pluriformiteit van de kerk. Hier is de polemieken met de Kuyperianen het scherpst. De prikkel om één kerk te worden zag Schilder verdwijnen met de pluriformiteit en daarom was hij kritisch. Verder komt Schilders kritiek op het klassieke onderscheid tussen de zichtbare en de onzichtbare kerk nu helder tot uiting: de kerk is primair zichtbaar. Wat er onzichtbaar is aan de kerk mag nooit van het zichtbare gescheiden worden. Dat hangt weer samen met Schilders visie op de ware kerk. Dankzij zijn dynamische

kerkvisie komt Schilder nooit tot de beruchte identificatie van de ware kerk met de *Gereformeerde Kerken*. Het *nulla salus extra ecclesiam* is uiteindelijk eschatologisch voor Schilder: de ware kerk is onaf. Zo blijven ook soteriologie en ecclesiologie onderscheiden, hoewel niet gescheiden. Meer dan de ware kerk, benadrukt Schilder de notie van de wettige kerk: dat is wél de *Gereformeerde Kerken* door haar trouw aan de confessie.

Schilders visie op het publieke karakter van de kerk krijgt meer profiel door zijn boude stellingname dat de kerk dateert van voor de zondeval. Kerk en schepping tracht hij zo nauw mogelijk te verbinden: de kerk is katholiek. Verder zien we in lijn met eerdere accenten de kritiek op Kuypers kerk als organisme verschijnen: Schilder houdt niet van onderscheidingen die de concrete kerk verdoezelen. Maar in de spanning die blijft bestaan in Schilders geschriften tussen de kerk als Gods nieuwe mensheid enerzijds en het smalle zichtbare instituut anderzijds, blijft de kerk als organisme aanwezig. Tenslotte is Schilders verzet tegen het Nationaal Socialisme, zowel voor als na de bezetting, een mooi voorbeeld van hoe Schilders publieke kerk in praktijk werkt: met de na- en voordelen van dien.

Vrijmaking, de ideeën beproefd: 1944-1952

De laatste periode van Schilders leven en werk heeft een eigen karakter. Dat komt door de genoemde scheuring in de *Gereformeerde Kerken* in 1944, de *Vrijmaking*. Voor Schilder is de betekenis van deze gebeurtenis nauwelijks te overschatten. Het was een persoonlijk trauma van de eerste orde: juist in de kerk, voor hem het belangrijkste, was hij afgezet. Ook verandert zijn rol ingrijpend: van luis in de pels werd hij nu kerkleider, een rol die hem slecht paste. Gevolg hiervan is dat veel van wat hij in deze periode schrijft, en zeker al het perswerk, het stempel draagt van de scheuring. De vraag die in dit hoofdstuk centraal staat is dan ook: hoe vormt de nieuwe context van de *Vrijmaking* Schilders denken? Om bij het beeld van het huis te blijven: wat gebeurt er nu het huis bewoond gaat worden?

Het is allereerst opvallend dat de apocalyptische sfeer van de vroege Schilder krachtig terugkeert in deze periode. Dit hangt samen met de Tweede Wereldoorlog en de sfeer die het begin van wat de Koude Oorlog zou worden kenmerkte. Schilders apocalyptische theologie, vol met spanning en een dialectische afkeer van 'commune' noties sloten naadloos aan bij de nieuwe context. De kerkelijke scheuring en het gevoel van 'een kleine rest' te zijn paste in dat beeld.

Schilders nadruk op het onderscheiden karakter van de kerk, en dan met name op de wettigheid van het instituut, krijgt een sterke impuls door de scheuring. Het juridische komt centraal te staan, maar ook de notie van de ware kerk krijgt sterker de nadruk dan voorheen, zonder de nuance helemaal te verliezen.

Het dynamische element raakt eerst op de achtergrond, maar vanaf de jaren 50 gaat Schilder dat juist in stelling brengen tegen het eenzijdige statische accent van zijn leerlingen. Dit laat ook goed zien hoe de nieuwe context de spanning tussen het statische en het dynamische in Schilders ecclesiologie helder voor het voetlicht brengt.

Ook de tweede spanning die we eerder noteerden - tussen de kerk als Gods nieuwe mensheid en de kerk als het smalle instituut - krijgt na de *Vrijmaking* profiel. Dat het publieke karakter van de kerk van het grootste belang is, staat ook in deze periode buiten kijf. Hoe kleiner de kerk, hoe sterker Schilder lijkt te benadrukken dat zij per definitie van wereldbetekenis is. Concreet spitst de discussie zich toe in de organisaties rondom de kerk, de 'doorgaande reformatie': moeten er eigen vrijgemaakte organisaties komen? In zijn reactie laat Schilder zien geen cultureel programma te hebben: hij pleit voor aparte organisatie als dat kan, maar ook voor realisme, bijvoorbeeld inzake de politiek. Ook in deze discussie voert Schilders persoonlijk trauma richting de *Gereformeerde Kerken* de boventoon. De discussie in de jonge kerken is duidelijk verbonden met de genoemde spanning in Schilders visie op de publieke rol van de kerk.

Een neocalvinistische wending naar de kerk?

In het slothoofdstuk komen we terug bij de hoofdvraag: *Hoe ziet Schilder de kerk als tegelijk onderscheiden van en betrokken op de wereld?* De eerste conclusie is dat Schilders denken een sterke consistentie vertoont. Dat er in Schilders denken sprake is van een verval of van 'twee Schilders' wordt daarmee weersproken. Schilders antwoord op de hoofdvraag begint bij de schepping, het cultuuroppdracht en de wortels van de kerk en het verbond, vervolgens de zondeval en het herstel in Christus en hoe dat de kerk stempelt. Zo wordt de kerk het hart van het cultuurmandaat en het instrument in Gods plan voor de wereld. De kerk is per definitie publieke kerk. Concreet krijgt dat vorm in haar leden. komt het onderscheiden karakter van die kerk om haar rol als 'cultuurhaard' te behouden aan de orde. De verbinding van Christus met de kerk is daar van kapitaal belang en die lijn loopt voor Schilder door het zichtbare instituut en haar belijdenis, maar is en blijft dynamisch. Aan het slot van het eerste gedeelte worden nog eens de twee centrale spanningen in Schilders denken over de kerk en haar rol in de wereld benoemd: tussen het dynamische en het institutionele en tussen de kerk als Gods mensheid en de kerk als de zichtbare zondagse samenkomst.

In het tweede deel van het slothoofdstuk wordt het antwoord van Schilder in gesprek gebracht met het denken van Stanley Hauerwas en de aan hem gestelde vragen rondom zijn wending naar de kerk. Zonder de pretentie van een volwaardige vergelijking, wordt op een aantal punten de bijdrage die Schilder kan leveren aan het gesprek rondom Hauerwas' wending naar de kerk neergezet.

Ten eerste benadrukt Schilder de Schrift en de openbaring als tegenover van de kerk, zonder de epistemische rol van de kerk te negeren. Ten tweede is Schilders nadruk op de schepping, waardoor de kerk altijd middel blijft, van belang, hoezeer Schilder ook, net als Hauerwas, een afkeer heeft van het zoeken naar gemeenschappelijkheid tussen de kerk en de wereld. Ten derde haalt Schilder met zijn nadruk op het instituut en haar belijdenis, het gewicht van de heiligheid van de kerk af; een gewicht dat bij Hauerwas erg groot is. Het gevaar bij Schilder is weer dat het persoonlijke, subjectieve wegvalt. Tenslotte lijken de visies van Schilder en Hauerwas wat betreft de concrete rol van de kerk en de wereld sterk op elkaar. Hauerwas' notie van getuigenis en Schilders nadruk op gehoorzaamheid in het dagelijks leven komen dichtbij elkaar. Toch maakt Schilders andere visie op de schepping dat de kerk altijd instrumenteel blijft en zo nooit vergeet dat het gaat om "het leven dat bruischt, daar buiten op de straat". De kerk is het middel, de wereld het doel.

Bibliography

Works by Schilder

- Schilder, K. *Tegenstrijdigheden in den Bijbel?* Christelijke brochure-reeks Ons Arsenaal. Zutphen: Van den Brink, 1919.
- *Wat is de hel?* 1st ed. Vlaardingen: Dorsman & Odé, 1919.
- “De ondergang van den antichrist”. In: *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 21.1 (1920).
- *Catechisatie-dictaat Delft 1923*. 1923.
- *Kerktaal en leven*. Amsterdam: Holland, 1923.
- *Licht in den rook*. 1st ed. Delft: Meinema, 1923.
- *De openbaring van Johannes en het sociale leven*. 1st ed. Delft: Meinema, 1924.
- “Onze verhouding tot het toneel”. In: *Opgang: Christelijk tijdschrift voor kunst en letteren* 8 (3A 1924), pp. 69–80.
- *Dr. A. Kuyper en het neo-calvinisme te Apeldoorn veroordeeld?: de rectorale rede van docent J.J. van der Schuit*. Delft: Meinema, 1925.
- *Gereformeerd farizeïsme? Zijn de gereformeerden de farizeeërs van dezen tijd?* Delft: Meinema, 1925.
- “Eros of Christus”. In: Tazelaar, C. and M. J. Leendertse. *Christelijk Letterkundige Studiën II*. Amsterdam: Holland, 1926.
- *Licht in den rook*. 2nd ed. Delft: Meinema, 1926.
- *Bij dichters en schrijftgeleerden: verzamelde opstellen*. Amsterdam: Holland, 1927.
- *Een hoornstoot tegen Assen?: (antwoord op een conscientiekreet)*. Kampen: Kok, 1928.
- *Tusschen ja en neen: verzamelde opstellen*. Kampen: Kok, 1929.

- Schilder, K. *Afbouw: een woord inzake de praktische erkenning van het promotierecht der theologische school te Kampen*. Kampen: Kok, 1930.
- *Christus in zijn lijden: overwegingen van het lijdensevangelie I: Christus aan den ingang van zijn lijden*. 1st ed. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1930.
- *Christus in zijn lijden: overwegingen van het lijdensevangelie II: Christus in den doorgang van zijn lijden*. 1st ed. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1930.
- *Christus in zijn lijden: overwegingen van het lijdensevangelie III: Christus bij den uitgang van zijn lijden*. 1st ed. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1930.
- “Over het „skandalon””. In: *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 32.2-3 (1931), pp. 49–67, 97–130.
- “Jezus Christus en het cultuurleven”. In: Both, H. L. and N. Buffinga. *Jezus Christus en het menschenleven*. Culemborg: De Pauw, 1932.
- *Wat is de hel?* 3rd ed. Kampen: Kok, 1932.
- *Zur Begriffsgeschichte des Paradoxon: mit besonderer Berücksichtigung Calvins und des nach-Kierkegaardschen Paradoxon*. Kampen: Kok, 1933.
- *De dogmatische beteekenis der Afscheiding ook voor onzen tijd*. Kampen: Kok, 1934.
- *Het credo: verslag van de college-voordrachten over het apostolisch symbool*. 1st ed. Fides Quaerit Intellectum, 1935.
- *Ons aller moeder anno domini 1935: een roepstem beantwoord*. Kampen: Kok, 1935.
- *Wat is de hemel?*¹. 1st ed. Kampen: Kok, 1935.
- *Geen duimbreed! een synodaal besluit inzake 't lidmaatschap van N.S.B. En C.D.U.* Kampen: Kok, 1936.
- *Geen stem voor de N.S.B.* 's Gravenhage: Centraal Comité van Antirevolutionaire Kiesverenigingen, 1937.
- *Christ in His Suffering*. Trans. by H. Zylstra. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1938.
- *Kompendium dogmatiek deel I*. Ed. by R. H. Bremmer and J. Verlare. 1st ed. Eerste Kamper Schrijfkamer, 1938.
- *College-verslagen der door Prof. Dr. K. Schilder in Amerika gehouden lezingen*. Ed. by J. Verlare and R. H. Bremmer. 1st ed. Kampen: Eerste Kamper Schrijfkamer, 1939.
- *Heidelbergsche catechismus*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1939/1940.
- *Kompendium dogmatiek deel V*. Ed. by J. Verlare and D. van Houdt. 1st ed. 1940.
- *Kompendium dogmatiek deel VI*. Ed. by J. Verlare et al. 1st ed. 1941.
- *Kompendium dogmatiek deel VII*. Ed. by D. v. H. Verlare J. and G. van Rongen. 1st ed. Kampen: Fides Quaerit Intellectum, 1941.

- *De kerk: verslag van de door prof. Schilder gegeven intermezzo-colleges over de problemen i.z. de kerk n.a.v de Heraut-artikelen over het leerstuk der kerk.* Ed. by N. Bruin and C. van Venetië. 1st ed. Utrecht, 1942.
- *Het verbond in de gereformeerde symbolen: collegeverslagen symboliek cursus 1941-1942.* Ed. by N. Bruin and C. van Venetië. 1st ed. Utrecht: Copieer-inrichting Elinkwijk, 1942.
- *Looze kalk: een wederwoord over de (zedelijke) crisis in de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland.* Groningen: Erven A. de Jager, 1944.
- *Bezet bezit: artikelen van de hand van prof. dr. K. Schilder, opgenomen in de nummers van de Reformatie uit de eerste maanden na de bezetting van Nederland - juni-augustus 1940.* Ed. by H. Knoop. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1945.
- *Dogmahistorisch praeadvies: Intermezzo-college Dogmatiek over het Praeadvies van Commissie I (1943).* Ed. by C. J. Breen, J. Faber, and C. Trimp. 1st ed. 1946.
- *Heidelbergsche catechismus: zondag 1-4.* Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1947.
- *Is de term algemeene genade wetenschappelijk verantwoord?: twee bijdragen tot de bespreking der gemeene-gratie-idee.* Kampen: Zalsman, 1947.
- *Kompendium dogmatiek deel IX.* Ed. by J. F. C. J. Breen and C. Trimp. 1st ed. 1947.
- *Christus en cultuur.* Franeker: Wever, 1948.
- *Om woord en kerk: deel I.* Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1948.
- *Christus in zijn lijden: overwegingen van het lijdensevangelie I: Christus aan den ingang van zijn lijden.* 2nd ed. Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1949.
- *Heidelbergsche catechismus: zondag 5-7.* Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1949.
- "Jaaroverzicht 1948". In: *Handboek ten dienste van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland 1949.* Ed. by K. Schilder. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1949.
- *Om woord en kerk: deel II.* Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1949.
- *Heaven, What Is It?* Trans. by M. M. Schoolland. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1950.
- *Heidelbergsche catechismus: zondag 8-9.* Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1950.
- *Christus in zijn lijden: overwegingen van het lijdensevangelie II: Christus in den doorgang van zijn lijden.* 2nd ed. Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1951.
- *De openbaring van Johannes en het sociale leven.* 3rd ed. Delft: Meinema, 1951.
- *Heidelbergsche catechismus: zondag 10.* Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1951.

- Schilder, K. *Kompendium ethiek. Deel VI*. 1st ed. Kampen: Brever, 1951.
- *Licht in de rook*. 3rd ed. Delft: Meinema, 1951.
- *Om woord en kerk: deel III*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1951.
- *Christus in zijn lijden: overwegingen van het lijdensevangelie III: Christus bij den uitgang van zijn lijden*. 2nd ed. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1952.
- *Om woord en kerk: deel IV*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1953.
- *Preken*. Ed. by W. G. de Vries. Vol. 1. Verzamelde werken I. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1954.
- *Preken*. Ed. by W. G. de Vries. Vol. 2. Verzamelde werken I. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1954.
- *Preken*. Ed. by W. G. de Vries. Vol. 3. Verzamelde werken I. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1955.
- *Schriftoverdenkingen*. Ed. by C. Veenhof. Vol. 1. Verzamelde werken II. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1956.
- *Schriftoverdenkingen*. Ed. by C. Veenhof. Vol. 2. Verzamelde werken II. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1957.
- *Schriftoverdenkingen*. Ed. by C. Veenhof. Vol. 3. Verzamelde werken II. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1958.
- *De Kerk*. Ed. by J. Kamphuis. Vol. 1. Verzamelde werken III. Nijkerk: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1960.
- *De Kerk*. Ed. by J. Kamphuis. Vol. 2. Verzamelde werken III. Nijkerk: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1962.
- *De Kerk*. Ed. by J. Kamphuis. Vol. 3. Verzamelde werken III. Nijkerk: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1965.
- キリストと文化. Trans. by 良知. 山中. 東京: すぐ書房, 1974.
- *Christ and Culture*. Trans. by G. van Rongen. Winnipeg: Premier, 1977.
- *Eerste rede, eerste optreden*. Ed. by E. A. de Boer. Franeker: Van Wijnen, 1989.
- “Ds. K Schilder aan Buskes, Oegstgeest, 10 juni 1926”. In: *Brieven Aan Buskes*. Ed. by J. de Bruijn. Donum Reeks. Amsterdam: Historisch Documentatiecentrum voor het Nederlands Protestantisme, 1990.
- *Eenzaamheid en gemeenschap: proza en poëzie van K. Schilder uit zijn studentenjaren*. Ed. by J. Dee. Haarlem: Vijlbrief, 1990.
- *Verzamelde werken 1940-1941*. Ed. by G. Harinck. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1995.
- *Verzamelde werken 1942-1944*. Ed. by W. G. de Vries. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1998.
- *Verzamelde werken 1944-1945*. Ed. by W. G. de Vries and G. Harinck. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2001.

- *Verzamelde werken 1917-1919*. Ed. by W. van der Schee. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2004.
- *Cristo y La Cultura*. Trans. by D. H. Terán. Publicaciones Contra Mundum, 2010.
- *Christ and Culture*. Trans. by W. Helder and A. Oosterhoff. Hamilton: Lucerna, 2015.
- 그리스도와 문화. Trans. by 성은. 손. 서울: 지평서원, 2017.
- Schilder, K. and D. H. T. Vollenhoven. *Rapporten I-VIII door K. Schilder en D.H.Th. Vollenhoven, als leden van de commissie, benoemd door de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, gehouden te Amsterdam 1936 (Acta art. 212, 273 sub 36)*. 1939.
- *Eender en anders: correspondentie tussen K. Schilder en D. H. Th. Vollenhoven*. Ed. by W. G. de Vries and H. Vollenhoven. Kampen: Kok, 1992.

Other References

- Aalders, J. C. *Veruitwendigen onze kerken?* Kampen: Kok, 1916.
- Aalders, M. J. *125 jaar Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid aan de Vrije Universiteit*. Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2005.
- *Heeft de slang gesproken?: het strijdbare leven van dr. J. G. Geelkerken (1879-1960)*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2013.
- Acta der Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland gehouden te Amsterdam van 25 augustus tot 2 oktober 1936*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1943.
- Acta der Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland gehouden te Leeuwarden van 24 augustus tot 9 september 1920*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1920.
- Acta van de Voortgezette Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland van Sneek 1939*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1943.
- Asselt, W. van and P. H. A. M. Abels. “De zeventiende eeuw”. In: *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*. Ed. by H. Selderhuis. 3rd ed. Utrecht: Kok, 2014, pp. 367–501.
- “The Seventeenth Century”. In: *Handbook of Dutch Church History*. Ed. by H. Selderhuis. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014, pp. 259–360.
- Bakhuizen van den Brink, J. *De Nederlandsche belijdenisgeschriften: vergelijkende teksten samengesteld*. Amsterdam: Uitgeversmaatschappij Holland, 1940.
- Balke, W. *Calvijn en de Doperse radikalen*. Amsterdam: Bolland, 1973.
- Banks, W. “Kierkegaard and Ibsen Revisited: The Dialectics of Despair in Brand”. In: *Ibsen Studies* 4.2 (2004), pp. 176–190.
- Barkema, R. *Nee tegen Karl Barth? Een historisch-theologische terugblik*. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012.

- Barth, K. *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik. Dritter Band. Die Lehre von der Schöpfung. Erster Teil*. Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag Zollikon, 1945.
- *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik. Dritter Band. Die Lehre von der Schöpfung. Zweiter Teil*. Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag Zollikon, 1948.
- *Der Römerbrief*. 14th ed. Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1989.
- Bartholomew, C. G. *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2017.
- Bate, H. N., ed. *Faith and Order: Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne, August 3-21, 1927*. London: Student Christian Movement, 1927.
- Batteau, J. M. "Schilder on the Church". In: *Always Obedient: Essays on the Teachings of Dr. Klaas Schilder*. Ed. by J. Geertsema. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995, pp. 65–100.
- Bavinck, H. *De Algemeene Genade. Rede gehouden bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Theol. School te Kampen op 6 December 1894*. Kampen: Zalsman, 1894.
- *Christelijke wetenschap*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1904.
- *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*. 4th ed. Vol. 2. 4 vols. Kampen: Kok, 1928.
- *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*. 4th ed. Vol. 3. 4 vols. Kampen: Kok, 1928.
- *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*. 4th ed. Vol. 4. 4 vols. Kampen: Kok, 1930.
- *Katholiciteit van Christendom en Kerk*. Ed. by G. Puchinger. 2nd ed. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1968.
- "Common Grace". Trans. by R. V. Leeuwen. In: *Calvin Theological Journal* 24.1 (1989), pp. 38–65.
- *Reformed Dogmatics Volume 2: God and Creation*. Ed. by J. Bolt. Trans. by J. Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.
- *Reformed Dogmatics Volume 3: Sin and Salvation in Christ*. Ed. by J. Bolt. Trans. by J. Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.
- *Reformed Dogmatics Volume 4: Holy Spirit, Church and New Creation*. Ed. by J. Bolt. Trans. by J. Vriend. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.
- Beek, A. van de. *Lichaam en Geest van Christus*. Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2012.
- Bekkum, K. van. "De gereformeerde theologie van Klaas Schilder". In: *Radix* 23 (1997), pp. 11–54.
- "Op de tweesprong van kerk en wereld". In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, pp. 17–34.
- Bel, J. *Bloed en Rozen: geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1900-1945*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2015.
- Bell, G. K. A., ed. *The Stockholm Conference 1925; the Official Report of the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work Held in Stockholm, 19-30 August, 1925*. London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1926.

- Belt, H. van den. "Uit de akker halen wat er in zit: Zelfontplooiing als roeping bij Klaas Schilder". In: *Kerk en Theologie* 65.1 (2014), pp. 32–39.
- ed. *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae / Synopsis of a Purer Theology. Volume 2, Disputations 24 - 42*. Trans. by R. Faber. Leiden: Brill, 2016.
- Bennett, K. D. "Involved Withdrawal, a Phenomenology of Fasting". PhD Thesis. Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 2013.
- *Practices of Love: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life of the World*. Brazos Press, 2017.
- Bensdorp, T. F. *De pluriformiteit der waarheid : een fundamentele misvatting van Dr. A. Kuyper of een hopeloos pleidooi : eene studie over Dr. Kuyper's pluriformiteitsstelsel*. Amsterdam: Borg, 1901.
- Berkouwer, G. C. *De persoon van Christus*. Dogmatische studiën. Kampen: Kok, 1952.
- *De Kerk I: eenheid en katholiciteit*. Dogmatische studiën. Kampen: Kok, 1970.
- *Een halve eeuw theologie: motieven en stromingen van 1920 tot heden*. Kampen: Kok, 1974.
- *The Church*. Trans. by J. E. Devison. Studies in Dogmatics. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1976.
- *Zoeken en vinden: herinneringen en ervaringen*. Kampen: Kok, 1989.
- Boer, E. A. de. "Professor Schilders atelier: zijn colleges, dictaten en studenten". In: *Almanak Fides Quadrat Intellectum*. FQI, 1990, pp. 148–176.
- "Biografie van een vriendschap: K. Schilder, D.H.Th. Vollenhoven, en de calvinistische wijsbegeerte." In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, pp. 81–116.
- Boerkoel, J. D. "De eenzame zoekt gemeenschap". In: *De Bazuin* 103.36 (1960).
- "Een kritische geest". In: *De Bazuin* 103.32 (1960).
- Born, E. T. van de and C. Veenhof. *De Kerk : referaten gehouden op de Bondsdag Rotterdam 1948*. Utrecht: Ned. Bond van (vrijgemaakte) Jongelingsverenigingen op Geref. Grondslag, 1948.
- Bratt, J. D. *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat*. Library of Religious Biography Series. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013.
- Bremmer, R. H. *Herman Bavinck en zijn tijdgenoten*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1966.
- "Schilder, K." In: *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands protestantisme*. Ed. by D. Nauta. Vol. 1. Kampen: Kok, 1978, pp. 314–318.
- Bretherton, L. "A New Establishment? Theological Politics and the Emerging Shape of Church-State Relations". In: *Political Theology* 7.3 (2006-07), pp. 371–392.

- Bretherton, L. *Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness*. Chichester etc.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
- Brink, G. van den and C. van der Kooi. *Christelijke dogmatiek*. 5th ed. Boeken-
centrum, 2015.
- *Christian Dogmatics: An Introduction*. Trans. by R. Bruinsma and J. D. Bratt.
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017.
- Brinkman, M. E. *De theologie van Karl Barth: dynamiet of dynamo voor christelijk
handelen: de politieke en theologische kontroverse tussen Nederlandse barthianen
en neocalvinisten*. Baarn: Ten Have, 1983.
- Brock, C. "Orthodox yet Modern: Herman Bavinck's: Appropriation of Schleier-
macher". PhD thesis. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 2017.
- Bruijne, A. L. T. de. "Niet van deze wereld: de hedendaagse gereformeerde
publieke theologie en de 'doperse optie'". In: *Theologia Reformata* 4 (2011),
pp. 366–390.
- "Schilders vroege spiritualiteit en de latere vrijgemaakten". In: *Wie is die
man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk
et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, pp. 49–80.
- "'Colony of Heaven': Abraham Kuyper's Ecclesiology in the Twenty-First
Century". In: *Journal of Markets & Morality* 17.2 (2014), pp. 445–490.
- "Midden in de wereld verliefd op God. Kuyper's aanzet tot een neocalvinis-
tische spiritualiteit." In: *Godsvrucht in de geschiedenis. Bundel ter gelegenheid
van het afscheid van prof. dr. F. van der Pol als hoogleraar aan de Theologische
Universiteit Kampen*. Ed. by E. A. de Boer and H. J. Boiten. Heerenveen:
Groen, 2015, pp. 441–453.
- Buizer, C. *Een aanslag op de gewetensvrijheid in de Gereformeerde Kerken (Het
rapport aan de classis Middelburg in zake de quaestie Ds. J. B. Netelenbos).
Met een wederantwoord op de Herautartikelen over het gravamen tegen Artt.
27-30 der geloofsbelijdenis*. Amsterdam: A.H. Kruyt, 1918.
- Buys, A. L. A. *Sodat hulle een kan wees: Klaas Schilder oor die kerk*. Totiusdal:
Koers, 2011.
- Calvin, J. *Ioannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia. Volumen II. Institutio
Christianae Religionis 1559*. Ed. by E. Cunitz, J.-W. Baum, and E. W. Reuss.
Brunsvigae: Schwetschke, 1864.
- Crisp, O. D. "On Barth's denial of universalism". English. In: *Themelios* 29.1
(Oct. 2003), pp. 18–29.
- Dam, R. J. et al. *Aan de Generale Synode van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Neder-
land, bijeen te Utrecht op 16 Maart 1944*. 1944.
- Deddens, D. and M. te Velde, eds. *Vrijmaking - Wederkeer : vijftig jaar vrijmaking
in beeld gebracht, 1944-1994*. Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 1994.

- Dee, J. J. C. *K. Schilder: zijn leven en werk*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1990.
- *Picturalia: fotobiografie K. Schilder*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1990.
- *K. Schilder - oecumenicus: K. Schilder over het 'kerkelijk vraagstuk'*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1995.
- Deursen, A. T. van. *Een hoeksteen in het verzuild bestel: de Vrije Universiteit 1880-2005*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2005.
- Dibelius, O. *Das Jahrhundert der Kirche: Geschichte, Betrachtung, Umschau und Ziele*. 6th ed. Berlin: Furcht, 1928.
- Doekes, G. *De moeder der geloovigen*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1910.
- Douma, J. *Algemene genade*. 1966.
- "Christus en cultuur". In: *K. Schilder: aspecten van zijn werk*. Ed. by J. Douma, C. Trimp, and K. Veling. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1990, pp. 169–201.
- "K. Schilder in zijn hantering en waardering van de gereformeerde confessie". In: *K. Schilder: aspecten van zijn werk*. Ed. by J. Douma, C. Trimp, and K. Veling. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1990, pp. 35–65.
- *Common Grace in Kuyper, Schilder, and Calvin: Exposition, Comparison, and Evaluation*. Ed. by W. Helder. Trans. by A. H. Oosterhoff. Lucerna, 2017.
- Douma, J., C. Trimp, and K. Veling, eds. *K. Schilder: aspecten van zijn werk*. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1990.
- Dreher, R. *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*. New York: Sentinel, 2017.
- Dunk, H. W. von der. *De verdwijnende hemel: over de cultuur van Europa in de twintigste eeuw*. Monografieën over Europese cultuur dl. 7. Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 2000.
- Eglinton, J. P. "Schilder als eenentwintigste-eeuws exportproduct". In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012.
- *Trinity and Organism: Towards a New Reading of Herman Bavinck's Organic Motif*. T & T Clark, 2012.
- Egmond, B. van. *Augustine's Early Thought on the Redemptive Function of Divine Judgement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Eichrodt, W. *Theologie des Alten Testaments*. 3 vols. Berlin, 1933.
- Endedijk, H. C. *De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. Deel 1 1892-1936*. Kampen: Kok, 1992.
- Fesko, J. V. *The Covenant of Redemption : Origins, Development, and Reception*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016.
- Geertsema, J., ed. *Always Obedient: Essays on the Teachings of Dr. Klaas Schilder*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995.

- Glas, G. "Mentaliteit: een korte peiling". In: *1944 en vervolgens*. Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 1994, pp. 52–57.
- Gootjes, N. H. "Schilder on the Christ and Culture". In: *Always Obedient: Essays on the Teachings of Dr. Klaas Schilder*. Ed. by J. Geertsema. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995, pp. 35–64.
- Griffioen, S. "De cultuurfilosofie in de openbaring van Johannes en het sociale leven". In: *Geen Duimbreed: facetten van leven en werk van prof. dr. K. Schilder*. Ed. by J. de Bruijn and G. Harinck. Baarn: Ten Have, 1990.
- Gurp, P. van. *K. Schilder: Christus en cultuur*. Goes: Woord en Wereld, 1991.
- Gustafson, J. M. "The Sectarian Temptation: Reflections on Theology, the Church and the University". In: *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society* 40 (1985), pp. 83–94.
- Haitjema, T. L. *Hoog-kerkelijk protestantisme*. Wageningen: Veenman, 1923.
- *Karl Barth*. Wageningen: H. Veenman & Zonen, 1926.
- *Dogmatiek als apologie*. Haarlem: Bohn, 1948.
- Harinck, G. "De donderwolk van Oegstgeest. Over K. Schilder en het gereformeerde studentenleven te Leiden". In: *Woordbestaan: lustrumbundel van de Vereniging van Gereformeerde Studenten te Leiden Franciscus Gomarus, ter gelegenheid van haar zesde lustrum 1957-1987*. 1987.
- *De Reformatie: weekblad tot ontwikkeling van het gereformeerde leven 1920-1940*. Passage 8. Baarn: Ten Have, 1993.
- "Geelkerken en de moderne cultuur". In: *De kwestie Geelkerken. Een terugblik na 75 jaar*. Ed. by G. Harinck. AD Chartas-reeks. Vuurbaak, 2001.
- "The Early Reception of the Theology of Karl Barth in the Netherlands (1919-1926)". Trans. by C. Anderson. In: *Zeitschrift für Dialektische Theologie* 17.2 (2001-01-01), pp. 170–187.
- "Een bleke werkelijkheid". In: *Alles of niets: Opstellen over K. Schilder*. Ed. by G. Harinck. AD Chartas-reeks 6. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2003, pp. 79–126.
- "Op losse schroeven: gereformeerden en de moderniteit". In: *Moderniteit: modernisme en massacultuur in Nederland 1914-1940*. Ed. by M. de Keizer and S. Tates. Walburg Pers, 2004, pp. 332–354.
- ed. *Holwerda herdacht: Bijdragen over het leven en werk van Benne Holwerda (1909-1952)*. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2005.
- "'Mijn volk dienen, zonder in conflict te komen met rechtmatige verordeningen'. Klaas Schilder en het verzet". In: *Tussen lijdelijkheid en verzet. Gereformeerden in bezettingstijd*. Barneveld, 2005, pp. 39–56.
- "Is Kierkegaard daar? Over de ontvangst van de Deen onder Nederlandse protestanten". In: *Liter. Christelijk Literair Tijdschrift* 12.54 (2009), pp. 31–40.

- “‘De kleine vrucht van zeer groote verwachting’ Nederlandse protestantse kerken en hun pogingen de samenleving aan te spreken over de Eerste Wereldoorlog”. In: *Trajecta* 23 (2014), pp. 291–314.
- “Van Nederland naar Amerika. Neocalvinisme in internationaal perspectief.” In: *Radix* 44.3 (2018), pp. 224–236.
- Harinck, G. and W. Berkelaar. *Domineesfabriek*. Prometheus/Bert Bakker, 2018.
- Harinck, G. and A. J. van Omme. “Schilders Amerikaanse reis van 1939”. In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, pp. 261–323.
- Harinck, G. and L. Winkeler. “De negentiende eeuw”. In: *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*. Ed. by H. Selderhuis. 3rd ed. Utrecht: Kok, 2014, pp. 601–734.
- “De twintigste eeuw”. In: *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*. Ed. by H. Selderhuis. 3rd ed. Utrecht: Kok, 2014, pp. 735–928.
- Harper, B. and P. L. Metzger. *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction*. Brazos Press, 2009.
- Hauerwas, S. *Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.
- *In Good Company: The Church as Polis*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995.
- “Why the Sectarian Temptation Is a Misrepresentation: A Response to James Gustafson”. In: *The Hauerwas Reader*. Ed. by J. Berkman and M. G. Cartwright. Durham, NC etc.: Duke University Press, 2001.
- *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church’s Witness and Natural Theology: Being the Gifford Lectures Delivered at the University of St. Andrews in 2001*. Gifford lectures 2001. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2001.
- *Een robuuste kerk*. Boekencentrum, 2010.
- *Hannah’s Child: A Theologian’s Memoir*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.
- *The Work of Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015.
- Hauerwas, S. and W. H. Willimon. *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony: A Provocative Christian Assessment of Culture and Ministry for People Who Know That Something Is Wrong*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- Healy, N. M. *Church, World, and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- *Hauerwas: A (Very) Critical Introduction*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014.
- Hennecke, S. *Karl Barth in den Niederlanden: Teil 1: Theologische, kulturelle und politische Rezeptionen (1919-1960)*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck et Ruprecht, 2014.
- Hepp, V. *De algemeene genade*. Kampen, 1937.

- Hertog, C. C. den. "Het spreken van de kerk in de theologie van dr. J. Koopmans". PhD thesis. Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2018.
- Holwerda, B. *De kerk in het eindgericht*. Nederlandsche Bond van (vrijgemaakte) J.V. op G.G. Bond van Geref. M.V. in Nederland, 1950.
- Honecker, M. *Kirche und Welt*. In: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*. Ed. by G. Müller. Vol. 18. Berlin, Boston: Walter De Gruyter, 1989, pp. 405–421.
- Honig, A. G. *Handboek gereformeerde dogmatiek*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1938.
- Insole, C. J. "Against Radical Orthodoxy: The Dangers of Overcoming Political Liberalism". In: *Modern Theology* 20.2 (2004), pp. 213–241.
- Jager, O. "Concretiseren tot het uiterste". In: *Ontmoetingen met Schilder: prof. dr. K. Schilder, 1890 - 19 december - 1990*. Ed. by G. Puchinger. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1990, pp. 63–75.
- Jong, A. C. de. *The Well-Meant Gospel Offer: The Views of H. Hoeksema and K. Schilder*. 1954.
- Jong, J. M. de. "Vierkant verstand: Klaas Schilder over geloof en rede". In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, pp. 175–186.
- Jong, L. de. *Het koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Deel I: Voorspel*. 's Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969.
- *Het koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Deel IV: mei '40 - maart '41. Tweede helft*. 's Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972.
- *Het koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Deel 12. Epiloog. Eerste helft*. 's Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1988.
- Kamphuis, B. "De geschiedenis: vicieus of lumineus?" In: *K. Schilder: aspecten van zijn werk*. Ed. by J. Douma, C. Trimp, and K. Veling. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1990, pp. 90–118.
- "Inleiding". In: *Wat is de hemel?* 3rd ed. Klassiek licht. Barneveld: Nederlands Dagblad, 2009.
- "Schilder en Bonhoeffer". In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, pp. 35–48.
- Kamphuis, J. "Critische sympathie, over den dogmatischen arbeid van dr. K. Schilder". In: *Almanak FQI 1953*. 1953, pp. 73–108.
- "Concentratie op wat hoofdzaak is': In memoriam prof. dr. K. Schilder, overleden 23 maart 1952". In: *Verkenningen II: Opstellen over de Kerk en haar geschiedenis*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1965, pp. 169–189.
- "Schilder - Kuitert - Wiskerke". In: *De Reformatie* 46.5 (1970), pp. 38–39.
- *K. Schilder - een gereformeerd anti-fascist*. 13. Woord en Wereld, 1990.

- Keizer, M. de and S. Tates. *Moderniteit: modernisme en massacultuur in Nederland 1914-1940*. Jaarboek van het Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie 15. Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2004.
- Kierkegaard, S. *Nieuwe keur uit de werken*. Ed. by R. Chantepie de la Saussaye and I. van Dijk. Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn, 1911.
- Klei, E. H. *'Klein maar krachtig, dat maakt ons uniek': een geschiedenis van het Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond, 1948-2003*. Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2011.
- Kooi, C. van der. "De denkweg van de jonge Karl Barth: een analyse van de ontwikkeling van zijn theologie in de jaren 1909-1927 in het licht van de vraag naar de geloofsverantwoording". PhD thesis. Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1985.
- "Karl Barth als Katalysator: die Niederländische neocalvinistische Barthrezeption nach 1926 als Funktion kulturtheologischer und offenbarungstheologischer Debatten". In: *Zeitschrift für Dialektische Theologie* 25.2 (2009), pp. 95–117.
- Koops, E. "Een conflict van strijdige levenswijzen: De gereformeerde prediking en de moderne cultuur (1911-1918)". In: *Moderniteit: modernisme en massacultuur in Nederland 1914-1940*. Ed. by M. de Keizer and S. Tates. Walburg Pers, 2004, pp. 66–83.
- Kuiper, D. T. *De voormannen: een sociaal-wetenschappelijke studie over ideologie, konflikt en kerngroepvorming binnen de Gereformeerde wereld in Nederland tussen 1820 en 1930*. Meppel: Boom, 1972.
- Kuiper, R. "Vrijmaking of wederkeer". In: *Vuur en vlam: aspecten van het vrijgemaakt-gereformeerde leven 1944-1969*. Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1994.
- Kuiper, R. and W. Bouwman, eds. *Vuur en vlam: de organisatie van het vrijgemaakt-gereformeerde leven 1944-1994*. Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1999.
- Kuitert, H. M. *De mensvormigheid Gods: een dogmatisch-hermeneutische studie over de anthropomorfismen van de heilige Schrift*. Kampen: Kok, 1969.
- Kuyper Jr., A. *In of van het verbond*. Rotterdam: Donner, 1936.
- Kuyper, A. 'Geworteld en gegrond.' *De Kerk als organisme en instituut. Intreërede uitgesproken in de Nieuwe Kerk te Amsterdam, 10 Augustus 1870*. Amsterdam: H. de Hoogh & Co., 1870.
- *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring: rede ter inwijding van de Vrije Universiteit den 20sten October 1880 gehouden in het koor der Nieuwe Kerk te Amsterdam*. Amsterdam: J.H. Kruyt, 1880.
- *De hedendaagsche Schriftcritiek in haar bedenkelijke strekking voor de Gemeente des levenden Gods*. Amsterdam: J.H. Kruyt, 1881.
- *Tractaat van de reformatie der kerken, aan de zonen der Reformatie hier te lande op Luthers vierde eeuweest aangeboden*. Amsterdam: Höveker & Zoon, 1883.

- Kuyper, A. *E voto Dordraceno : toelichting op den Heidelbergschen catechismus*. 3rd ed. Vol. 2. 4 vols. Kampen : J.H. Kok, 1892.
- *The L.P. Stone Lectures for 1898-1899: Calvinism. Six Lectures Delivered in the Theological Seminary at Princeton*. New York/Chicago/Boston: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1899.
- *Drie kleine vossen*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1901.
- *De gemeene gratie. Eerste deel. Het geschiedkundig gedeelte*. 4th ed. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1902.
- *De gemeene gratie. Tweede deel. Het leerstellig gedeelte*. 4th ed. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1902.
- *Locus de Foedere: college-dictaat van een der studenten*. 2nd ed. Vol. 3. Kampen, 1910.
- *Het Calvinisme. Zes Stone-lezingen, in October 1898 te Princeton (N.-J.) gehouden*. 2nd ed. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1925.
- *Common Grace: God's Gifts for a Fallen World. Volume 1: The Historical Section*. Ed. by J. J. Ballor and S. J. Grabill. Trans. by N. D. Kloosterman and E. M. van der Maas. Lexham Press, 2015.
- *On the Church*. Ed. by J. Halsey Wood and A. M. McGinnis. Lexham Press, 2015.
- *Common Grace: God's Gifts for a Fallen World. Volume 2*. Ed. by J. J. Ballor and S. J. Grabill. Trans. by N. D. Kloosterman and E. M. van der Maas. Lexham Press, 2019.
- Langevelde, A. P. van. *In het klimaat van het absolute: C. Veenhof (1902-1983) Leven en werk*. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2015.
- Lindeboom, L. *Heb den waarheid en den vrede lief: open brief aan Dr. A. Kuyper*. Leiden: Donner, 1880.
- Lindeboom, L. and A. W. Bronsveld. *De Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk: een en ander over haar toestand, roeping en toekomst, aan de ernstige overweging ook van de geloovigen buiten haar aanbevolen*. Heusden: Gezelle Meerburg-Wuijster, 1875.
- Linden, T. van der. "Modernisme op klompen? Noordmans en Schilder in debat over de algemene genade". In: *Alles of niets: Opstellen over K. Schilder*. Ed. by G. Harinck. AD Chartas-reeks 6. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2003, pp. 127–144.
- Mahn, J. A. *Becoming a Christian in Christendom: Radical Discipleship and the Way of the Cross in America's Christian Culture*. Fortress Press, 2016.
- Mannion, G. "Postmodern Ecclesiologies". In: *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*. Ed. by L. S. Mudge and G. Mannion. London; New York: Routledge, 2008.

- McCormack, B. L. *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- Mekkes, P. M. J. and J. J. van der Wiel. *Twee leden van de Gereformeerde Kerk van 's-Gravenhage-Oost, Mekkes en van der Wiel, hebben 19 juni 1944 tot den Raad dier kerk een brief gericht van den volgende inhoud: 1944*.
- Menigerlei genade: wekelijksche leerredenen*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1920.
- Messelink, J. "Vijftig jaar gereformeerd onderwijs: achtergronden, motieven, opgaven". In: *1944 en vervolgens*. Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 1994, pp. 29–41.
- Meyenfeldt, F. H. von. "Schilder, de man op de kansel". In: *Geen duimbreed! Facetten van leven en werk van prof. dr. K. Schilder 1890-1952*. Ed. by G. Harinck and J. de Bruijn. Baarn: Ten Have, 1990.
- Minnen, J. M. van. "Een dichter-schriftgeleerde tussen hemel en hel". In: *Voorlopig* 2.9 (1970).
- "Licht in den rook. De theologie van prof. dr. K. Schilder". In: *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift* 86 (1986), pp. 80–100.
- Molendijk, A. "Neocalvinistisch cultuurprotestantisme. Abraham Kuypers Stone Lectures". In: *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* 29.65 (2006), pp. 5–19.
- Mondriaan, P. "De nieuwe beelding in de schilderkunst I - XI". In: *De Stijl: Maandblad voor de moderne beeldende vakken* 1.1-5, 7-12 (1917).
- Mouw, R. J. *He Shines in All That's Fair: Culture and Common Grace : The 2000 Stob Lectures*. The Stob Lectures 2000. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001.
- "Klaas Schilder as Public Theologian". In: *Calvin Theological Journal* 38 (2003), pp. 281–298.
- *Adventures in Evangelical Civility*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016.
- Mulder, H. *Lindeboom, L.* In: *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands protestantisme*. Vol. 3. 6 vols. Kampen: Kok, 1988, pp. 250–253.
- Noakes-Duncan, T. *Communities of Restoration: Ecclesial Ethics and Restorative Justice*. T & T Clark, 2017.
- Ortega y Gasset, J. *La rebelion de las masas*. Revista de Occidente, 1929.
- Paul, H. J. and B. T. Wallet. *Oefenplaatsen: tegendraadse theologen over kerk en ethiek*. Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2012.
- Pearce, J. *Literary Converts: Spiritual Inspiration in an Age of Unbelief*. London: HarperCollins, 1999.
- Pfleiderer, G. *Karl Barths praktische Theologie: zu Genese und Kontext eines paradigmatischen Entwurfs systematischer Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert*. Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 115. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000.
- Piper, J. *The Future of Justification: A Response to N.T. Wright*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2008.
- Puchinger, G. *Is de gereformeerde wereld veranderd?* Delft: Meinema, 1966.

- Puchinger, G. *Een theologie in discussie: prof. dr. K. Schilder: profeet, dichter, polemist*. Kampen: Kok, 1970.
- *Ontmoetingen met Schilder: prof. dr. K. Schilder, 1890 - 19 december - 1990*. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1990.
- Rahner, K. *Kirche und Welt*. In: *Herders Theologisches Taschenlexicon*. 4. 1972, pp. 216–233.
- Ramaker, W. *Het beginsel der afscheiding en de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*. Harlingen: Drukkerij G. Bouritius, 1934.
- Rasker, A. J. *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795: geschiedenis, theologische ontwikkelingen en de verhouding tot haar zusterkerken in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*. Kampen: Kok, 1986.
- Ratzinger, J. and A. Bovone. *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion*. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1992.
- Richel, P. J. *Het kerkbegrip van Calvijn*. s.n., 1942.
- Ridderbos, J. “Van Molenstraat naar Oudestraat. Klaas Schilder tussen 1890 en 1933”. In: *Jaarboek voor de geschiedenis van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* 3 (1989), pp. 95–135.
- “Schilder en de Tweede Wereldoorlog”. In: *Geen duimbreed! Facetten van leven en werk van prof. dr. K. Schilder 1890-1952*. Ed. by G. Harinck and J. de Bruijn. Baarn: Ten Have, 1990, pp. 84–94.
- *Strijd op twee fronten : Schilder en de gereformeerde ‘elite’ in de jaren 1933-1945 tussen aanpassing, collaboratie en verzet op kerkelijk en politiek terrein*. Kampen: Kok, 1994.
- Rookmaker, H. R. *Modern Art and the Death of Culture*. Downers Grove: IVP, 1970.
- Ruiter, F. and W. H. M. Smulders. *Literatuur en moderniteit in Nederland 1840-1990*. Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1996.
- Ruler, A. A. van. *Kuyper's idee eener christelijke cultuur*. Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1940.
- Schaeffer, J. “Schilder mysticus”. In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenen-twintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, pp. 205–260.
- Schaff, P., ed. *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes. Volume 3. The Evangelical Protestant Creeds, With Translation*. New York: Harper and brothers, 1882.
- Schee, W. van der. “Aantreden in de rij”. Loenen, 2004.
- Schuit, J. J. van der. *Dr. A. Kuyper en de sluimerende wedergeboorte*. Dordrecht: D.J. van Brummen, 1926.

- Schutte, G. J. "Schilder en Kuyper". In: *Geen Duimbreed! Facetten van leven en werk van prof. dr. K. Schilder 1890-1952*. Ed. by G. Harinck and J. de Bruijn. Baarn: Ten Have, 1990, pp. 21–30.
- Shakespeare, S. *Radical Orthodoxy: A Critical Introduction*. London: SPCK., 2007.
- Smelik, J. "Schilder, de kerkdienst en het kerklied". In: *Alles of niets: Opstellen over K. Schilder*. Ed. by G. Harinck. AD Chartas-reeks 6. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2003, pp. 47–77.
- Smit, H. J. D. "Gehoorzamen: achter Christus aan! Schilder over de kerk". In: *K. Schilder: aspecten van zijn werk*. Ed. by J. Douma, C. Trimp, and K. Veling. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1990, pp. 66–89.
- "Kerk en organisatie. Motieven en achtergronden: een peiling". In: *Toekomst voor gereformeerde organisaties*. Ed. by H. J. D. Smit. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1994, pp. 35–104.
- Smith, J. K. A. *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology*. Authentic Media, 2004.
- "Reformed Monasticism". In: *Wie is die man? Klaas Schilder in de eenentwintigste eeuw*. Ed. by M. K. van Rijswijk et al. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2012, pp. 197–204.
- Söderblom, N. *De ware broederschap*. Trans. by A. Norel and O. Norel. Amsterdam: W. Ten Have, 1926.
- Spans, M. "Schijnt daar Kierkegaard's licht? Een onderzoek naar de invloed van Nieuwe keur van Søren Kierkegaard in Licht in den rook van Klaas Schilder". Bachelor's thesis. Theologische Universiteit Kampen, 2018.
- Spengler, O. *Der Untergang des Abendlandes : Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*. Wilhelm Braumüller, 1918.
- Staalduine, T. J. S. van. *Om de lijn der Afscheiding: Prof.dr. G.M. den Hartogh en de Vrijmaking van 1944*. Heerenveen: Groen, 2004.
- Stackhouse, M. L. "Liberalism Dispatched vs. Liberalism Engaged". In: *Christian Century* (1995), pp. 962–967.
- "In the Company of Hauerwas". In: *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 2.1 (1997).
- Stellingwerff, J. "Kritiek op K. Schilder als filosoferend dogmaticus." In: *Philosophia Reformata* 27 (1962), pp. 106–125.
- Stout, J. L. "Not of This World: Stanley Hauerwas and the Fate of Democracy". In: *Commonweal* 130.17 (2003), pp. 14–20.
- Strauss, S. A. *Alles of niks: K. Schilder oor die verbond*. Bloemfontein: DUO-drukkers, 1986.

- Terpstra, E. J. "K. Schilder en P. Jongeling: het echec van Schilders leiderschap". In: *Vrijgemaakte vreemdelingen*. Ed. by M. te Velde and H. Werkman. TU-Bezinningsreeks 6. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 2007.
- Theoharis, T. C. "‘After the First Death, There Is No Other.’ Ibsen’s Brand and Kierkegaard’s Fear and Trembling". In: *Ibsen Studies* 1.1 (2000), pp. 9–29.
- Til, C. van. "Common Grace. 2". In: *Westminster Theological Journal* 8.2 (1946), pp. 166–200.
- *A Survey of Christian Epistemology*. In Defense of Biblical Christianity. Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing, 1969.
- Til, H. R. van. *The Calvinist Concept of Culture*. Philadelphia: P&R, 1972.
- Trimp, C. "Belijnde bevinding". In: *K. Schilder: aspecten van zijn werk*. Ed. by J. Douma, C. Trimp, and K. Veling. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1990, pp. 147–168.
- Tuininga, M. J. *Calvin’s Political Theology and the Public Engagement of the Church*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Veenhof, C. *Gedenkt uw voorgangeren: in memoriam Prof. Dr. K. Schilder, 19 Dec. 1890-23 Maart 1952*. Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1952.
- Veenhof, J. "Medewerkers van God: K. Schilder over plaats en taak van de mens in het handelen van God." In: *‘Achter den tijd’: opstellen aangeboden aan dr. G. Puchinger ter gelegenheid van zijn vijftenzestigste verjaardag*. Ed. by W. F. de Gaay Fortman et al. Haarlem: Acta-Media, 1986.
- "Schilder en de dogmatiek". In: *Geen duimbreed! Facetten van leven en werk van prof. dr. K. Schilder 1890-1952*. Ed. by G. Harinck and J. de Bruijn. Baarn: Ten Have, 1990.
- "Geschiedenis van theologie en spiritualiteit in de Gereformeerde Kerken". In: *100 jaar theologie: aspecten van een eeuw theologie in de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (1892-1992)*. Ed. by M. E. Brinkman. Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1992, pp. 14–95.
- Veldhuizen, P. *God en mens onderweg: hoofdmomenten uit de theologische geschied-
beschouwing van Klaas Schilder*. Leiden: Groen, 1995.
- Veling, K. "Liefhebben met het verstand: over schriftgeloof en rationaliteit bij K. Schilder". In: *K. Schilder: aspecten van zijn werk*. Ed. by J. Douma, C. Trimp, and K. Veling. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1990, pp. 231–261.
- Vliet, P. C. van der. "Jezus Christus en het kerkelijk leven". In: Both, H. L. and N. Buffinga. *Jezus Christus en het menschenleven*. Culemborg: De Pauw, 1932.
- Vries, J. P. de. "Schilders betekenis voor het politieke en sociale leven". In: *K. Schilder: aspecten van zijn werk*. Ed. by J. Douma, C. Trimp, and K. Veling. Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1990, pp. 202–230.

- Vries, W. G. de. *Calvinisten op de tweesprong: de Internationale Federatie van Calvinisten en haar invloed op de onderlinge verhoudingen in de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in de dertiger jaren van de twintigste eeuw*. Groningen: De Vuurbaak, 1974.
- “Schilder en de vrijmaking”. In: *Geen duimbreed! Facetten van leven en werk van prof. dr. K. Schilder 1890-1952*. Ed. by G. Harinck and J. de Bruijn. Baarn: Ten Have, 1990, pp. 165–171.
- Werkman, H. “Schilder en de literatuur”. In: *Geen duimbreed! Facetten van leven en werk van prof. dr. K. Schilder 1890-1952*. Ed. by G. Harinck and J. de Bruijn. Baarn: Ten Have, 1990, pp. 106–130.
- Wisse, G. *Nieuwe religie: (en hare wijsbegeerte)*. Arnhem: Arnh. Drukkerij en Uitgeverij, 1911.
- Wood, J. H. *Going Dutch in the Modern Age: Abraham Kuyper's Struggle for a Free Church in the Netherlands*. Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Wright, N. T. *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision*. London: SPCK., 2009.
- Yoo, H. M. *Raad en daad: infra- en supralapsarisme in de Nederlandse gereformeerde theologie van de 19e en 20e eeuw*. Kampen: Mondiss, 1990.

Chart of Dutch Denominations

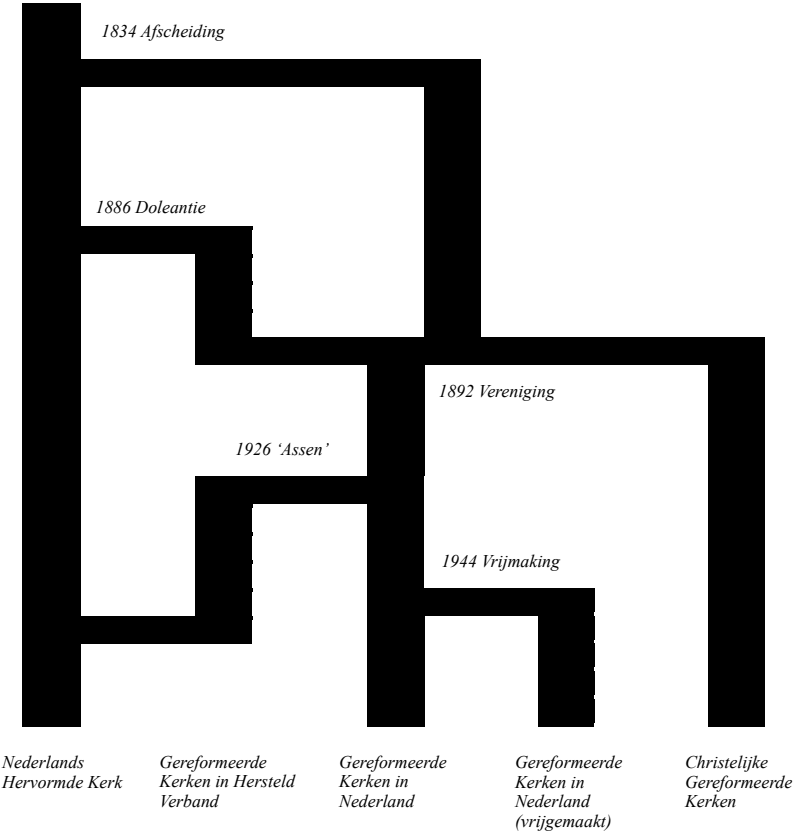


Figure A.1: Simplified overview of the genesis of Dutch denominations in the nineteenth and twentieth century

Glossary

Afscheiding English: secession. Secession from the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* in 1834 over such issues as hierarchical church government and church-state relations as they had been reformulated in 1816, as well as doctrinal liberty. Key figures: Hendrik de Cock, Albertus van Raalte, Hendrik Scholte. 34, 35, 37–40, 50, 60, 72, 108, 115–117, 158, 164–166, 174, 180, 229

Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk Church that issued in the wake of the *Vereniging* in 1892, when a number of churches that had emerged from the *Afscheiding* elected not to join the united *Gereformeerde Kerken*, claiming continuity with their own *Afscheiding* tradition. This church is characterized by pietism and a mistrust of Abraham Kuyper and his activism. Key figures: Jacob Jan van der Schuit, Gerard Wisse. 34, 40, 72, 115, 116, 128, 131, 165, 166, 174, 175, 241, 243, 246

De Heraut English: herald. Ecclesial weekly founded in 1850 by Abraham Kuyper. After the Doleantie it became the foremost periodical in the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. Abraham Kuyper was its editor-in-chief until his death in 1920, when his son Herman Kuyper took over. 115, 161, 162, 164, 166, 167, 248

De Reformatie English: reformation. Ecclesial weekly founded in 1920 as part of a renewal movement in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* following the First World War. After 1935, when Schilder became editor-in-chief, it became his and his followers' periodical. During the Second World War, the *De Reformatie* was banned because of Schilder's articles. After the war it became the weekly of the *Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt)*. 49, 57,

63, 70, 81, 91, 92, 101, 110, 127, 156, 159, 160, 162, 164, 166, 167, 170, 213, 217, 220, 235, 239, 241, 246–249

Doleantie English: lamenting/protest. Secession from the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* in 1886 led by Abraham Kuyper. 34, 35, 38–40, 50, 70, 72

Doorbraak English: breakthrough. Political movement in the Netherlands in the wake of the Second World War. The movement sought to overcome the confessional boundaries that had characterized Dutch society before the war by uniting in the non-confessional Labour Party (*Partij van de Arbeid*). 238, 255, 260, 261, 265

Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt) Churches that issued from the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in 1944. Until the 1960s, they were officially known as ‘the Reformed Churches maintaining article 31’. Key figures: Klaas Schilder, Saekle Greijdanus. 23–25, 131, 141, 189, 202, 213, 230, 235, 237–245, 247–250, 254–259, 263, 266, 267, 277, 284, 286, 301

Gereformeerde Kerken in Hersteld Verband Churches that separated from the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in 1926 after the Synod of Assen. Key figures: Jan Geelkerken, Jan Buskes. 128, 162, 248

Gereformeerde Kerken Churches that issued from the *Vereniging*, the 1892 merger between the *Afscheiding* and *Doleantie* churches. 2, 23, 31–34, 37, 40, 42, 45, 49, 50, 59–62, 65, 70, 71, 74, 89–91, 93, 96, 101, 108, 116–118, 126–128, 131, 148, 149, 151, 156, 157, 162, 166, 167, 174, 181, 188, 189, 191, 203, 219, 220, 229–232, 234, 235, 238, 239, 241–243, 245, 246, 257, 259, 261, 266, 268, 276, 299, 301–303

Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk Oldest and largest Protestant Church in the Netherlands with a direct continuity from the Reformation. The name and polity underwent drastic change in 1816. It encompasses a variety of coexisting currents, such as *gereformeerd* (pietistic-orthodox), *confessioneel* (confessional-orthodox), *ethisch* (moderate), and *modern* (liberal). 2, 33–37, 69, 70, 116–118, 128, 165, 166, 170, 180, 181, 215, 226

Vereniging English: unification. Merger in 1892 of the churches issued from the *Afscheiding* and the *Doleantie*, thereby forming the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*. 35, 174

Vrijmaking English: liberation. Schism in the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in 1944 that occurred after the synod had suspended, among others, Saekle Greijdanus and Klaas Schilder and added doctrinal statements in addition to

the existing confessions. 133, 178, 189, 229, 246–248, 255, 259, 262, 265, 266, 269, 278, 281, 302, 303

Antirevolutionary party Dutch: *Antirevolutionaire partij* (ARP). Christian political party founded by Abraham Kuyper in 1879, building on the political movement of Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer. It was antirevolutionary in the sense that it challenged the basic assumptions of the French Revolution. It was the first political party in the Netherlands in the modern sense. The party was closely, but not uniquely associated with the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. 48, 248, 257, 262, 265

Reformational Movement Dutch: *Reformatorische Beweging*. Movement of renewal within the *Gereformeerde Kerken* that started in the 1930s. The movement emphasized a simple reading of Scripture (over against ‘scholasticism’), a covenantal view, and a rationalistic-objective approach, and was anti-pietistic in orientation and critical of Abraham Kuyper. Key figures: Antheunis Janse, Herman Dooyeweerd, Dirk Vollenhoven, Kees Veenhof. 157, 161, 162, 171, 172, 231, 245, 259, 262, 264

synod of Assen Defining synod of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* in 1926 that adhered to a literal interpretation of Scripture and suspended Rev. Jan Geelkerken for his diverging views. 22, 85, 90, 91, 95, 96, 99, 100, 102, 103, 107, 110, 154, 155, 158, 159, 248, 261

Index

- Aalders, G. C., 32
Aalders, J. C., 61
Aalders, M. J., 37, 91
Abels, P. H. A. M., 60
Althaus, P., 193
Anselm, 59
Aquinas, T., 208
Asselt, W. van, 60
Augustine, A., 208
- Bakhuizen van den Brink, J., 104, 186
Balke, W., 109
Banks, W., 43
Barkema, R., 159
Barth, K., 4, 6, 8–10, 14, 17, 21, 22, 37, 40, 43, 47, 54–59, 70, 79, 85, 86, 90, 91, 95–103, 107, 117, 118, 122, 130, 133, 141, 154, 155, 158–161, 163, 164, 172, 175, 176, 188, 192–196, 198, 201, 207, 210, 214, 227, 240, 252, 260, 261, 268, 274, 280, 283, 289, 293
Bartholomew, C. G., 61
- Bate, H. N., 128
Batteau, J. M., 24, 71, 76, 146, 272, 276
Bavinck, H., 2–4, 21, 32–37, 40, 50, 55, 56, 58, 60, 71, 74, 80, 89, 93, 95, 96, 108, 118, 158, 161–163, 167, 174, 177, 178, 188, 198, 205, 207–209, 211, 212, 274, 275, 289
Bavinck, J. H., 4
Beek, A. van de, 9
Bekku, K. van, 52, 100, 141, 146, 208, 272, 276
Bel, J., 32, 48, 93, 101
Bell, G. K. A., 127
Belt, H. van den, 139, 171
Bennett, K. D., 5
Bensdorp, T. F., 71
Benson, R. H., 79
Berkelaar, W., 35, 38, 235, 245, 246, 248, 250
Berkhof, H., 198
Berkouwer, G. C., 4, 24, 29, 57, 70, 131, 133, 141, 150, 151, 191, 208, 234, 268, 272, 282, 285

- Beza. T., 208
 Bloem, J. C., 101
 Boer, E. A. de, 26, 159, 262
 Boerkoel, J. D., 40–42
 Boethius, A. M. T. S., 196, 209
 Bonhoeffer, D., 6, 119, 268, 269
 Bordewijk, F., 101
 Born, E. T. van de, 189
 Bos, B. A., 243, 245
 Bouwman, H., 76
 Bouwman, W., 235
 Bovone, A., 115
 Braak, M. ter, 48, 93, 101, 169
 Bratt, J. D., 2, 36, 37, 61, 102
 Breen, C. J., 246
 Bremmer, R. H., 22, 37–39
 Brent, C. H., 128
 Bretherton, L., 7, 9
 Brink, G. van den, 9, 288
 Brinkman, M. E., 96
 Brock, C., 36
 Bronsveld, A. W., 38, 115
 Bruijne, A. L. T. de, 9, 61, 63, 64,
 109, 113, 129, 138, 216
 Brunner, E., 163
 Brussaard, J. C., 91
 Buitendijk, F. J. J., 91
 Buizer, C.M., 70
 Buskes, J. J., 328
 Buys, A. L. A., 24, 100, 121, 126,
 133, 134, 146, 167, 189,
 272, 276, 280, 282

 Calvin, J., 2, 3, 6, 20, 21, 25, 33,
 36, 109, 116, 127, 139,
 145, 166, 169, 171, 208
 Cartwright, M. G., 16
 Cock, H. de, 116, 117, 178, 327
 Crisp, O. D., 17

 Dam, R. J., 259

 Dante, 78, 195
 Darby, J. N., 71, 73
 Deddens, D., 245
 Dee, J. J. C., 22, 24, 31, 34, 38–42,
 44, 50, 60, 72, 77, 90–92,
 126, 128, 131, 133, 135,
 146, 156, 167, 173, 268,
 276, 282
 Deursen, A. T. van, 37
 Dibelius, O., 6
 Diemer, H., 115, 253
 Dijk, D. van, 243
 Dijkstra, J., 167
 Doekes, G., 71
 Dooyeweerd, H., 4, 161, 162, 329
 Douma, J., 3, 21, 25, 82, 117, 140,
 141, 150, 199, 202, 208,
 209, 247, 264, 268, 272
 Dreher, R., 137
 Du Plessis, J. , 101
 Duinkerken, A. van, 48
 Dunk, H. W. von der, 46

 Eglinton, J. P., 2, 4
 Egmond, B. van, 21
 Eichrodt, W., 175
 Elffers, A., 116
 Elsschot, W., 101
 Elzenga, G., 32
 Endedijk, H. C., 37, 71, 91, 96,
 117, 174

 Fesko, J. V., 174
 Francke, J.A., 259

 Geelkerken, C. van, 219
 Geelkerken, J. G., 32, 90, 91, 96,
 100, 107, 108, 128, 235,
 328, 329
 Geertsema, J., 25
 Gelderen, C. van, 31
 Gezelle, G. P. T. J., 51, 75, 79, 273

- Glas, G., 244
 Goethe, J. W. von, 41
 Gootjes, N. H., 25, 139
 Greham Machen, J., 101
 Greijdanus, S., 234, 235, 243, 244, 328
 Greshoff, J., 101
 Griffioen, S., 25, 82
 Groen van Prinsterer, G., 36, 329
 Grosheide, F. W., 57
 Grünewald, M., 62, 63
 Gunning Jr., J. H., 36, 37, 96
 Gunning jr., J. H., 57
 Gurp, P. van, 203
 Gustafson, J. M., 11–17, 292, 293

 Haitjema, T. L., 69, 96, 97, 109, 118, 163, 212
 Harinck, G., 3, 26, 27, 32, 35, 37, 38, 43, 48, 81, 91, 92, 96, 101, 117, 126, 157, 158, 160, 162, 176, 195, 203, 220–222, 235, 245, 246, 248, 250
 Harper, B., 11
 Hauerwas, S., 9–14, 16, 94, 95, 108, 109, 119, 120, 122, 123, 187, 271, 287–294
 Healy, N. M., 12, 14–17, 287, 288
 Hegel, G. W. F., 172, 194
 Hennecke, S., 57, 96
 Hepp, V., 24, 31, 92, 127, 131, 140, 141, 156, 157, 162–164, 166, 167, 232, 276
 Herrigel, E. V., 92
 Hertog, C. C. den, 221
 Hitler, A., 92, 157
 Hoedemaker, P. J., 37, 69
 Hoeksema, H., 101
 Hoekstra, T., 92
 Holwerda, B., 176, 238, 262

 Honecker, M., 19
 Honig, A. G., 37, 39, 92, 109, 115, 148, 156, 158, 167, 188, 211, 212
 Huizinga, J., 48

 Ibsen, H. J., 41–44, 56, 58
 Insole, C. J., 12

 Jager, H. J., 249, 250
 Jager, O., 52, 76, 146, 268, 272, 276
 Janse, A., 161, 162, 175, 178, 329
 Janssen, R., 101
 Jong, A. C. de, 114
 Jong, J. M. de, 59
 Jong, L. de, 93, 157, 220, 236, 260

 Kamphuis, B., 120, 156, 163, 198
 Kamphuis, J., 29, 52, 95, 103, 162, 163, 219, 246, 248, 250, 265, 268, 269
 Keizer, M. de, 32
 Keulen, D., 195
 Kierkegaard, S., 42–45, 47, 52, 56–58, 98, 172, 188, 194, 195, 258, 283
 Klei, E. H., 262
 Koller, W., 92
 Kooi, C. van der, 8, 9, 21, 96, 288
 Koops, E., 49
 Kuenen, A., 2, 35, 36
 Kuiper, D. T., 39, 118
 Kuiper, R., 235, 245, 250, 262
 Kuitert, H. M., 76, 122, 194, 201, 208, 210, 268, 269, 272, 280
 Kuyper Jr., A., 178
 Kuyper, A., 2–6, 20, 21, 25, 32–40, 48, 50, 51, 55, 57, 58, 60, 61, 67, 69, 71, 74, 75, 77–84, 87, 89, 90, 95, 96,

- 98, 102, 109, 118, 127,
 129, 130, 138–141, 148,
 152, 157, 158, 161–163,
 168, 172, 174, 175, 178,
 183, 188, 192–194, 198,
 200–202, 204, 206–209,
 212, 214–216, 219, 226,
 227, 247, 257, 268, 274,
 275, 277, 278, 283, 286,
 289, 327–329
 Kuypers, H. H., 32, 157, 162–164,
 167, 219, 232, 327
 Kuypers-Van Oordt, H., 77

 Langevelde, A. P. van, 45, 162, 169,
 245, 249, 250, 259
 Leeuw, G. van der, 151
 Lenin, V. I., 46
 Lindeboom, L., 38, 39, 115, 118
 Linden, T. van der, 141

 MacIntyre, A. C., 15
 Mahn, J. A., 8
 Mannion, G., 1
 Marsman, H., 32, 47, 51, 101
 McCormack, B. L., 21
 Mekkes, P. M. J., 259
 Messelink, J., 262
 Metzger, P. L., 11
 Meyenfeldt, F. H. von, 151, 242,
 245
 Milbank, J., 7–9, 12
 Minnen, J. M. van, 146, 268, 269,
 276
 Miskotte, K. H., 24, 136, 139–141,
 163, 203, 219
 Molendijk, A., 127
 Moltmann, J., 198
 Mondriaan, P., 48, 102, 215
 Moor, J. C. de, 76
 Mouw, R. J., 4–7, 201, 209

 Mulder, H., 38
 Multatuli, 80

 Nietzsche, F. W., 46, 54, 62, 65, 79
 Niftrik, G. C. van, 121, 260
 Noakes-Duncan, T., 8, 9
 Noordmans, O., 24, 32, 136, 140,
 141, 163, 268, 269, 276
 Noordtzijs, A., 38
 Noordtzijs, M., 38

 Olsen, R., 43, 44
 Omme, A. J. van, 160
 Ortega y Gasset, J., 46, 125

 Pannenberg, W., 198
 Paul, H. J., 8
 Pearce, J., 47
 Perron, E. G. du, 48, 93, 101, 169
 Pfeleiderer, G., 6
 Piper, J., 140, 141
 Plato, 172
 Puchinger, G., 24, 41, 76, 93, 140,
 141, 225, 265, 268, 272

 Raalte, A. C. van, 327
 Rahner, K., 18, 19
 Ramaker, W., 116
 Rasker, A. J., 37
 Ratzinger, J., 115
 Richel, P. J., 23, 126, 131, 282
 Ridderbos Sr., J., 32
 Ridderbos, J., 31, 34, 39, 60, 213,
 219–221, 229, 234
 Rietveld, G., 48
 Robinson, B., 47
 Rookmaker, H. R., 148
 Ruiter, F., 48
 Ruler, A. A. van, 24, 52, 140, 141,
 163, 202, 209, 260, 264,
 268, 276

- Schaeffer, J., 42, 51, 63, 79, 80
 Schaepman, H. J. A. M., 51, 75, 273
 Schaff, P., 171, 186, 191, 203, 211
 Schee, W. van der, 38, 39
 Schempp, P., 58
 Schermerhorn, W., 238
 Schilder, H. J., 234, 243
 Schilder-Walter, A., 31, 43, 45
 Schleiermacher, F. D. E., 36, 80, 215, 281
 Scholte, H. P., 327
 Scholten, J. H., 2, 35, 36
 Schuit, J. J. van der, 174, 175, 327
 Schutte, G. J., 163
 Shakespeare, S., 12
 Slauerhof, J., 101
 Smelik, J., 151
 Smit, H. J. D., 24, 133, 140, 146, 167, 186, 189, 190, 276
 Smith, J. K. A., 5–7
 Smulders, W. H. M., 48
 Spans, M., 43
 Spengler, O., 46, 48
 Spier, H. J., 163
 Staalduine, T. J. S. van, 59
 Stackhouse, M. L., 13, 15, 16, 287–289, 292
 Steiner, R., 46
 Stellingwerff, J., 122, 280
 Stout, J. L., 11, 12, 15, 17, 292
 Strauss, S. A., 45, 76, 114, 158, 173, 208, 272, 285
 Söderblom, N., 128
 Tagore, R., 82
 Tate, S., 32
 Teellinck, W., 162
 Terpstra, E. J., 235
 Theoharis, T. C., 42, 44
 Til, C. van, 102
 Til, H. R. van, 25
 Tillich, P., 163
 Toorop, J. T., 61, 62
 Trimp, C., 25, 114, 173, 246, 247, 268
 Tuininga, M. J., 19
 Vaart Smit, H. W. van der, 32, 91
 Van Til, C., 101, 102
 Veenhof, C., 40, 42–44, 189, 229, 249, 250, 265, 329
 Veenhof, J., 100, 124, 134, 139, 162
 Velde, M. te, 245
 Veldhuizen, P., 22, 45, 76, 173, 208, 272, 285
 Veling, K., 25, 98, 247
 Vliet, P. C. van der, 109, 148
 Vogel, C. J. de, 51
 Vollenhoven, D. H. T., 161, 162, 232, 247, 262, 329
 Vries, J. P. de, 25
 Vries, W. G. de, 128, 264
 Waard, J. de, 41
 Wallet, B. T., 8
 Werkman, H., 75–77, 79, 80, 272
 Wesley, J., 291
 Wiel, J. J. van der, 259
 Wielenga, B., 92
 Wielenga, D. K., 92
 Wiersinga, L., 41, 43
 Wilhelmina van Oranje-Nassau, 220
 Willimon, W. H., 10
 Winkeler, L., 117, 126
 Wisse, G., 39, 40, 327
 Wood, J. H., 20, 109
 Woods, F. T., 127
 Wright, N. T., 140, 141, 187
 Yoder, J. H., 7–9, 12
 Yoo, H. M., 208

Zijlstra, A., 242

Zuidema, S. U., 242, 245

Over de auteur

Johannes Marinus de Jong werd geboren in 1986 in Leidschendam. Van 1998-2004 doorliep hij het VWO (Natuur en Techniek) aan de Gereformeerde Scholengemeenschap Guido de Brès in Arnhem en Amersfoort. Vervolgens studeerde hij een jaar theologie aan de Faculté Jean Calvin in Aix-en-Provence. Daarna behaalde hij een bachelor theologie aan de Theologische Universiteit Kampen (2010). In 2014 studeerde hij cum laude af in de predikantsmaster aan diezelfde universiteit met de specialisatie systematische theologie onder prof. dr. B. Kamphuis. Als onderdeel van zijn master studeerde hij een trimester aan Wycliffe Hall aan de Universiteit van Oxford. Vanaf 2014 tot 2018 was hij als junior-onderzoeker verbonden aan de Theologische Universiteit Kampen. In 2017 verbleef hij een half jaar aan Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena om te studeren bij prof. dr. Richard Mouw. Marinus publiceerde *Altijd Groter: 21 redenen om (niet) in God te geloven* (Vuurbaak 2018) en verschillende wetenschappelijke artikelen. Sinds januari 2019 is hij predikant van de Gereformeerde Kerk (vrijgemaakt) van Amsterdam-Centrum, de Oosterparkkerk. Hij is getrouwd met Wibbina en ze hebben twee dochters.